

THE  
P A S S I O N;  
O R,  
A DESCRIPTIVE AND CRITICAL  
N A R R A T I V E  
O F  
THE INCIDENTS,  
AS THEY OCCURRED,  
ON EACH DAY OF THE WEEK,  
IN WHICH  
CHRIST'S Sufferings are Commemorated:  
WITH REFLEXIONS.  
CALCULATED FOR  
RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

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By THOMAS KNOWLES, D.D.  
PREBENDARY of ELY. K

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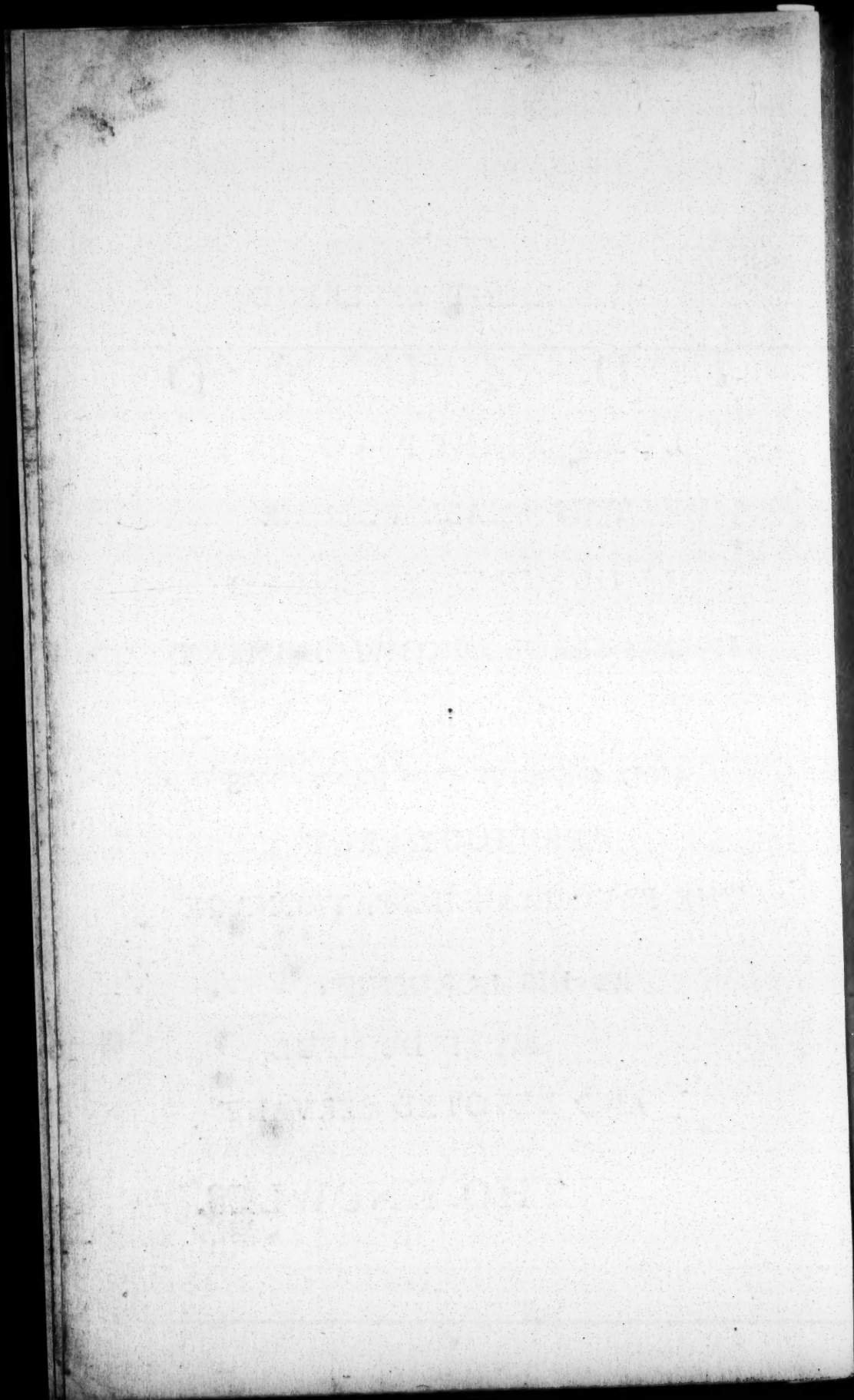
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M,DCC,LXXX.





TO  
THE RIGHT REVEREND  
EDMUND  
LORD BISHOP OF ELY  
THIS SMALL VOLUME  
IS HUMBL Y INSCRIBED  
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
OF MANY  
AND GREAT OBLIGATIONS  
PARTICULARLY  
THE FAVOUR OF HIS PATRONAGE  
BY HIS LORDSHIP'S  
MOST DUTIFUL  
AND DEVOTED SERVANT  
THO. KNOWLES.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**I**T is unnecessary to say, for it is too general to be overlooked, how great is the visible decay of that religious attention, which the primitive christians, and our pious forefathers, of later ages, had judged due to the interesting and important events of the Passion-Week. The design of the following sheets is, if possible, to revive that religious spirit which the subject of them deserves: and for this purpose, I have traced the various scenes of our Saviour's Passion, as it is most probable they were exhibited on each day of the week; have endeavoured to settle the Harmony of the Four Evangelists, whose accounts might otherwise

## ADVERTISEMENT.

wise appear to be confused or misplaced; and have subjoined to the Narrative of each day's occurrences some Reflexions upon them, tending to promote that serious frame of mind, which the solemnity of the Season most justly requires.—To the whole is added an Exhortation to the pious observance of this week, which, it is devoutly to be wished, may have some good effect upon their hearts, who are desirous of establishing their religious faith, or who are not totally indifferent to the great importance of religious duties.

Our most holy Church, wisely moderate in all her discipline, has relaxed much of that primitive strictness, which was looked upon, in the early ages, as essential to penitential rites; but she has preserved enough to excite a becoming spirit of devotion; and by the additional service of each day has directed our thoughts



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thoughts to those exercises of religious retirement, which our interest in the Redeemer's sufferings, if not our gratitude, will naturally suggest.—May it never be said, as far as it concerns ourselves, that *Christ is dead in vain!*

Bury St. Edmund's, Feb. 10, 1780.

[illegible]

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# PALM-SUNDAY.

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## S E C T. I.

### THE NARRATIVE.

Matt. xxi. 1. Mark xi. 1. Luke xix. 29. John xii. 12

**T**HIS was the day, on which, according to the Jewish calendar, the paschal lamb was presented at *Jerusalem*, as the law of *Moses* appointed: (b) and therefore on this day the *lamb of God*, who was to take away the sins of the world, presented himself in the temple, when he had made his public entry into the city, amidst the acclamations of an admiring multitude, singing  
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(b) Exod. xiii. 3, &c. On the tenth day of the first month; i. e. on the fifth day inclusive before the pass-over. Comp. with John xii. 12, 13.

their *hosannas* for an expected deliverance through his means with such other marks of joy, as we are told, were usual with Jewish, and with almost all other people, while they were leading their victims to the altar: so that this may well be understood as the prelude to his approaching passion.

On the morning of this day he left *Bethany*, where he had been entertained with a grateful piety by *Lazarus's* two sisters; and having selected two of his disciples, probably *Peter* and *John*, when he was come within somewhat less than a mile from *Jerusalem* (c) or rather into the suburbs of it, sent them to *Bethphage* (d) which was connected with it by a long street,

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(c) What *St. Luke* calls a sabbath-day's journey from it, which was nearly or altogether eight furlongs, or a mile, v. *Lightfoot's Harm.* vol. I. p. 252. *St. Mark* adds, *in a place, where two ways meet*, which was probably the mark of the sabbath-day's journey from the city.

(d) *Bethphage* was the very place, from whence the beasts reserved for sacrifice were drawn out for the service of the temple. The Jewish doctors say, it was accounted in all things, as *Jerusalem*, a long scattering street, that lay towards the mount of Olives.



street, upon a seemingly extraordinary message, which nothing but a divine prescience could have suggested, and nothing but an implicit faith in his word could have induced them to undertake. He pointed out to them precisely the very spot, where they should *find an ass tied, and a colt with her*, which the owner would readily suffer them to lead away, on their giving only this reason, *that the Lord had need of them.*

The event justified his reasonableness in sending them upon such an errand, and their readiness in complying with it. There was miracle, as well as truth in his words. They found it exactly as their master had foretold; and, leading the ass and the colt to the place from whence he had sent them, they set him upon the colt, though it had never before been used to carry any one upon its back, and in this uncommon mode, attended only by a company of poor fishermen, and a multitude of the meaner sort, he rode in humble procession into the city.

The disciples, if they had recollected what their own scriptures told them, could not be surprized at the circumstances of such an entry.

#### 4 THE NARRATIVE.

try, which might appear to the ignorant beholders as no better than a mock-solemnity; for the prophet *Zachariah* had taught them, (ch. ix. 9.) that the King of the Jews, the great, the long-expected Messiah, would come to them in this spirit of meekness and humility, making his public entry, like one of the ancient patriarchs in the times of primitive simplicity, *riding upon the colt of an ass*: A prophecy, which the Jews themselves acknowledge to be meant of the Messiah; and which Christians, as well as Jews, must acknowledge, was never fulfilled in any other, but our Jesus: whence it cannot but follow, that he, who came in that style, was indeed the Messiah, foretold by the prophet.

Bishop *Sherlock* does not seem to reason with his usual accuracy, when he endeavours, in his dissertation upon this subject, (*e*) to answer the ridicule of the infidel at the circumstances of this scripture-history, by shewing, "That the ass was not then reckoned so contemptible a creature, as we now reckon it, since kings  
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(*e*) Diff. 4. annexed to his Use and Intent of Prophecy.

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and princes are described in the Old Testament as riding upon it.\* For as it is given by the prophet to be characteristic of the Messiah, and this very riding upon the foal of an ass is introduced as an instance that he was meek and lowly, therefore the more contemptible the beast, the greater was his humility: and whether *David*, or any other potentate rode upon it in ancient times, is nothing to the present purpose: if the prophet foretold that thus it should be, and our Saviour has fulfilled the prophecy, it is enough. It would not have answered his purpose, to have made his entry in a more stately appearance, and it would have defeated the prophecy, if he had; which is a sufficient answer to every scoff of the profane wit: an appearance in any other guise would rather have proved, that he was not the King of the Jews, though it might have flattered their expectations that he was, and would moreover have given occasion to stronger and more reasonable objections against the grounds of that high claim. No one can be at a loss to determine, why it was so ordered, who considers at all, how the Messiah is described in several parts of the prophetic writings, and that his kingdom was not to be introduced or supported by worldly pomp. If a more abject creature could have



been found to convey this new king into the royal city, it would still have suited with his character, and would have been chosen to exalt the idea of his lowliness.

The people, who attended annually at the feast, excited by the curiosity, which the report of *Lazarus's* resurrection had raised, thronged together to behold this extraordinary person entering, as it were triumphantly, at such a public time. To testify this their admiration at *a great prophet being risen up among them* in the best manner they could, some of them *spread their clothes*, whilst others *cut down branches* from the palm-trees and *strewed them, in the way*; (f) the usual decorations, with which they celebrated the triumphs of their victorious kings and emperors. (g) For we are told, that it was a  
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(f) Or rather, as Dr. *Lightfoot* interprets it, they made little tents and tabernacles of clothes and boughs by the way-side, according to the custom of the feast of tabernacles. St. *John* also adds, that *taking branches of palm-trees in their hands, they went forth to meet him*. *Lightfoot's* Heb. & Talmud. Exerc. in loc.

(g) See *Maccabees*, xiii. 21. and *Rev.* vii. 9.



common practice among the people of the East, upon the approach of their kings and princes, to spread their garments upon the ground for them to tread or ride over; (b) and it is well known, that the ancients used to spread the road with the branches of trees and flowers on the days of festivity. And that nothing might be wanting on their parts to express the joy which they had conceived at the appearance of such a mighty deliverer, they saluted him in the highest strains of congratulation, that Jews could be supposed to utter, *Hosannah to the son of David! Blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest.* May those blessings, and the peace and glory comprehended in the wish, which that word conveys, befall him, not only upon earth, but in the highest heavens.

*Hosannah to the son of David* was an open acknowledgement of his being the Messiah and God, to whom alone they applied the expression, praying to him to save them,

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(b) See *Whitby* in loc. and *Grotius*. See also 2 Kings, ix. 13.

from whom alone salvation could come; for such is the meaning of the sacred invocation: save us we beseech thee, thou who art in the highest; save us thou Messiah, who art the son of David: for we are convinced by the miracles, which thou hast wrought, and by the prophecies, which have pointed thee out, that thou art indeed the Christ, who should come into the world. The words therefore, thus sung, imply as much as if it were said, we now sing hosannah to the Messiah. (i)

It is remarkable, that the salutations, now applied to our Saviour at the passover, were the usual acclamations of sacred joy at the feast of tabernacles; which seem at first sight, to be applied therefore at an improper time. But the tabernacle was the type of *God dwelling among us in the flesh*, or pitching his tent or tabernacle among us: for so St. John, i. 14. applies the word, *σκηνοῦσε*, *he dwelt among us*, which, referring immediately to the divine Schecinah, or God's glorious presence, under the Old Testament, expresses their belief in Christ's divine nature, or in  
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(i) V. Lightfoot, Heb. & Talm. Exer. in loc.

the fulness of the godhead dwelling in the human. (k) So that by using on this occasion the terms of that festival, they transferred them with a due acknowledgement to the antitype, as to the Messiah, whom they expected. To which may be added, from Dr. *Lightfoot*, “that being willing to receive the  
 “Messias with all joyfulness, triumph, and  
 “affection of mind (for by calling him the  
 “son of David, it is plain they took him for  
 “the Messias) they had no way to express  
 “a more ardent zeal and joy at his coming,  
 “than by a solemn procession of that feast.  
 “They have the Messias before their eyes;  
 “they expect great things from him; and  
 “are therefore transported with excess of joy  
 “at his coming.” (l)

But this degree of reverence, which the people naturally shewed to him, who, as they were convinced, gave sufficient proof of a superior authority, quickly became the occasion of his sufferings. It raised the jealousy of the vain-glorious Pharisees, who began to suspect,

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that

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(k) See *Whitby* in loc.

(l) *Lightfoot*, Exercit.



that as his credit with the people increased, their own would decline. For what concord hath outward washing, in which they rested, with inward purity, which he taught? Or, what agreement can there be between those who approve, and him, who condemns hypocrisy? The citizens however did not, or would not know him: and *they cried out*, therefore, some with wonder at the novelty of the appearance, others with laughter at the meanness of it, *Who is this?* But the multitude, who were better inclined, could answer them, *This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.* In naming the name of *Nazareth* they unwillingly erred; for this served only to confirm some in their prejudices against him, since they did not look for the Messiah from thence, (nor indeed, did he arise from thence) it being proverbial among them, that *out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

Though he had entered in the public character of King of the Jews, yet to shew that his kingdom was not of this world, he, at his inauguration, which was no more, than an introduction to his passion, instead of going to the royal palace, went directly to the temple; and there, as he had done at a preceding passover,



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passover, (see *John* ii. 13.) drove the buyers and sellers from the holy place, the outer court, or court of the Gentiles, which had been thus profaned by their iniquitous traffic. The pretence for carrying on this traffic within the sacred boundaries was, that it was designed for the convenience of those, who came from far to the passover, and could more easily bring their money, and buy the beasts there for sacrifice, than drive them thither. And the money-changers were placed there, that they might the more readily change money for those who wanted the half-shekel, which was their yearly poll, or price of redemption, or upon the bills of return. But Jesus would not allow it. By a miracle, almost as great as any he wrought, he cleared the holy ground of all their commodities, and compelled them to yield to a command, by which they were astonished too much to prepare for resistance.

After this, he healed many, who were brought to him. But when the chief-priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and heard the acclamations of his followers repeating this *Hosannah to the son of David*, they were offended, and asked him whether he attended at all to what they said.

He told them, Yes; for that this very clamour of the people, at which they were so offended, was no other, than an accomplishment of what *David* had foretold, or of what might, at least, be accommodated to this occurrence, *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.*

Jesus knew that *his hour* was now approaching; he therefore took occasion from the desire of an introduction to him by certain Greeks in an application to *Philip* and *Andrew*, probably with a view to some temporal advancement in his kingdom, to discourse to them and the people, on the subject of his death and sufferings: the sense of which, added to the sense of God's displeasure for the sins of the world, which in his human nature he bore for a time, seized him with horror enough to cry out, in that pathetic address to his heavenly father, *Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?* No: that would be inconsistent with the purpose of my mission: for *for this cause came I unto this hour*, that I might die, in a short time, in obedience to my father's will. Immediately after he had said this, there

came a voice from Heaven, (*m*) which alarmed the people, and induced some of the chief rulers to believe on him : but they ventured not openly to confess their belief, thro' fear of the Pharisees, who would upon such a confession have *put them out of the synagogue*..—On this day however Jesus escaped from the malicious designs of his enemies : for after having harangued the people, and the evening being now come, he returned to *Bethany*, with his disciples, and lodged there that night.

Bishop *Pearce* imagines, differently from all the Commentators and Harmonists, that this entry into *Jerusalem*, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, happened on the second day (our Monday) of the Passion-week : for, says he, Jesus arrived at *Lazarus's* house on the first day, (our Sunday) and made his

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(*m*) Dr. *Lightfoot* has remarked, that Christ was thrice attested from Heaven, according to his threefold office, King, Priest, and Prophet. At his baptism, for the great High Priest, when he was anointed, and entered into his ministry ; at his transfiguration, for the great Prophet, to whom all must hearken ; and now, for the great King, when he had newly fulfilled this prophecy, *Rejoice, O Sion, behold thy King cometh, &c.*



his entry into *Jerusalem* on the next day. But it is expressly said by *St. John*, that *he came to Bethany six days before the passover*: and the Bishop himself says in his note on *Matt. xxvi. 2.* that the passover began on the Thursday evening; so that if we take both days inclusive, it must be on the Saturday that he came to *Bethany*, and the entry must have been on the Sunday; and so it has been always understood, by our calling this, Palm-Sunday: besides that, by placing this occurrence upon the Monday, we shall not be able to fix the proper days for the other transactions of the last six days of our Saviour's life.



## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

**T**HIS day is distinguished by the name of Palm-Sunday, from the circumstance, just related, of the multitude, who attended our Saviour at his publick entrance into Jerusalem, strewing palm-branches by the road-sides, as he passed along. This was done in conformity to their appointed custom of celebrating the feast of Tabernacles, *Lev. xxiii. 39, 40.* (n) And we are told that the Jews still wish, at the celebration of this feast, that they may rejoice in this manner at the coming of the Messiah (o) *Hosannah* too was a common acclamation which the Jews used upon this feast, not only in remembrance of their past deliverance from *Egypt*, but in hopes likewise of a future one by the coming of  
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(n) Vid. *Ainsworth* in loc.

(o) See *Whitby* on *Matt. xxi. 8.*

of the Messiah. It was, therefore, in a spiritual sense, emblematical of liberty, victory, and joy ; and as such, it will suggest to us some pious reflections upon this day's occurrence, that will prepare our hearts for the great event, to which it was no other than the introduction. " For though there was no  
" ostentation of worldly pomp, yet there  
" were trophies of a higher and more spiritual  
" nature carried before him. He rode on,  
" triumphing over principalities and powers ;  
" over the rulers of the darkness of this  
" world, and spiritual wickedness in high  
" places ; and led Satan, the prince of the  
" air, in chains." (p)

*Behold your king cometh unto you !* Not to release you from the captivity of slaves, but to redeem you from the thralldom of sin : not to gain a victory for you over an incroaching tyrant, but to triumph over death and the grave : not to give you the fleeting joy of a day, but to secure the never-fading bliss of eternal ages : not to set up a kingdom, which may be overthrown, but to establish in the  
heart

heart a dominion which no power on earth can undermine; a kingdom of grace, which not all the powers of darkness shall defeat. Let us behold and welcome him: for he comes with divine authority, and divine blessings in his hand. Let us revere his authority, and submit to it. Let us implore his blessings, and deserve them. Let us follow him with our praises, whilst we attend him to his Temple; and with hearts full of gratitude for the salvation he brings, join our Hosannah [that is, Save us we beseech thee] in the pious strain of his first attendants: Hosannah to the great illustrious son of David, who now vouchsafes to make his publick appearance among us: blessed be He, even the long expected king and sovereign of God's people, who now comes to us in the name of the Lord! May the most exalted honours be paid him! May continued prosperity attend him! Let there be peace in heaven, and a rich variety of divine favours be dispensed from thence; and in return for them let glory be given to God in the most exalted strains, and let all the highest orders of angels join in his praises! Blessed and prosperous be the sacred kingdom of our father David! May it speedily be established, and may it long flourish



flourish; even that kingdom which is not gained by the alarms of war, and garments rolled in blood; but which comes in the name of the Lord, and renders itself, by that powerful influence on men's spirits which we now feel, victorious over whatsoever would oppose it! Hosannah, therefore, in the highest strains! Repeat again, and again your songs and congratulations. (q)

But let us carry our thoughts from these humiliating circumstances of popular applause to that great and glorious day of the Lord, when we shall meet him, not in so lowly an attire as that in which he now appears, but *making the clouds his chariots, and riding upon the heavens, as it were upon an horse*. Not followed by a multitude of the meaner sort, collected together to behold the strangeness of his appearance; but attended by *thousand thousands* of the most glorious beings, the angels, *ministring unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousands standing before him*. Let us qualify ourselves by our pious meditations on that awful event, in the most exalted sense of these hymns and acclamations,

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(q) Doddridge's Fam. Expos.



acclamations, to shout forth with gladness in that day of salvation, blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord! yea, blessed be he that cometh, not to suffer, but to reign; not to redeem, but to recompence. Hosannah to the meek son of God! Hosannah to the glorious majesty of the son of god! Blessed be the kingdom which is come to rule in our hearts by grace! Blessed be the kingdom that cometh to reward our obedience with glory! Hosannah to him who came to Jerusalem to be judged in great humility! Hosannah to him, who cometh with terrible pomp to judge both the quick and the dead. Hosannah in the highest! (r)

In the mean time let this his humble appearance in procession to the royal city teach us to disregard all outward splendour, as unworthy of our attention, when we are in pursuit of the heavenly glory, which awaits us at the end of our journey.

Let his repairing first to the temple teach us, that religious worship ought to be our first  
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and chief concern; and let the zeal for the honour of his father's house, profaned by their sacrilegious abuse of it, teach us the reverence due to that sacred place; which we must not approach but with minds disengaged from worldly business, and which, whilst we continue in it, should banish from thought, as far as possible, all other cares but those immediately relating to the service in which we are employed.

We may not indeed imitate his correction, for in this we have no authority that will justify us; but we may, and ought to imitate his zeal, as it will guard us, more especially against the profane custom of the unthinking multitude, who can enter these solemn places of devotion as wantonly as if they were places only of common resort, and behave in them with as much indifference as if neither soul nor body were concerned in the profanation.

Common places are destined to common uses; but the house of God is appropriated to divine, and cannot be alienated without sacrilege. For God himself is the sole Lord and proprietor of it. And this signifies, without exception, the holy and religious purpose,

purpose, to which it is intendedly consecrated. The prophet forbids the carrying of any burden on the sabbath-day, because it was a sanctified day; and for the same reason, because the temple was a sanctified place, would our Lord therefore not suffer the carrying of any vessel through it. It is the dwelling-place of God; and we are bound to keep up a reverent affection towards it. The end of consecrating it is for the publick worship of the almighty; and it is from this consideration of far greater dignity than any provided for other purposes; so that if ever we otherwise apply it, we rob that of its relative honour, and God of his absolute property. If we consider at all what such a profanation deserves, we cannot but judge how merciful the Redeemer was, in not carrying his chastisement still farther. What these profaners deserved I need not say; what they suffered was but a small part of it.

Not that in the traffic carried on there every part was certainly iniquitous: for the expression of *the house of prayer being made a den of thieves*, may refer to abusing the Temple, by perverting the intention of it; it being said only in another place, *make*  
not



*not my father's house a house of merchandize;* but however lawful it might be in any other place, yet it *defiled the sanctuary*: as in another case, there may be on a common day many things decent and innocent, which yet will *profane the sabbath*. In one respect, however, the sanctuary might well be said to be perverted into a den of thieves, because the priests had found means, by this infamous practice, to extort money from the people by letting it out for this purpose. And of this gross corruption, all they are, in some measure, guilty, who make a *gain of godliness*, or who counterfeit godliness as their way to worldly gain.

It was most extraordinary that such a company, encouraged as they were by the priests and Levites, should not stand up in their own defence, and wrest the scourge from the hands of a seemingly defenceless man; or that no complaint should be heard of it at this time from any quarter. But it is an instance of Christ's almighty power over the spirits of men. They do not seem to have been sensible that they could resist him: the priests had not courage to oppose him. So true is it, that our hearts are not our own; they are, they *must be*, such as their maker will have them.



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One would scarcely think it possible, that the same men, who now proclaimed the majesty of the Saviour by their well-timed Hosannahs, should, before the end of the week, join in the unhallowed cry of his malicious persecutors, *Crucify him*. But what will the mere outward profession of regard avail? If the religious principle be not rooted in the heart, it will be *carried away with every wind of false doctrine*. The wavering christian will shout, *Hosannah to the son of David* to day; and if that should become unfashionable, he will, with the same eagerness of zeal, cry out, *Crucify him* to-morrow.

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M O N D A Y.

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## S E C T. I.

## THE NARRATIVE.

Matt. xxi. 18, 19. Mark xi. 12. John xii. 37.

**T**HE next morning our Saviour went again to Jerusalem, though he knew, that the chief priests and rulers had already conceived some mischievous designs against him on account of what had passed the foregoing day. In his way thither, he who could, if he had pleased, have *commanded the stones to be made bread*, submitting to the infirmities of human nature, became hungry. Seeing a fig-tree at some distance from the road-side, which promised by its flourishing appearance all the sustenance he wanted, he went to it: for it was not yet the time of gathering their ripe figs, and therefore not likely that it should be stripped of its fruit. But he found none upon it; and therefore, as if he were displeased at the disappointment, which in truth he foreknew

knew, he passed a sentence of perpetual barrenness upon the useless plant. The sentence was no sooner passed, than executed; for immediately the fig-tree withered away.

In St. *Mark* only it is added, as a seeming reason why he found nothing but leaves, *that the time of figs was not yet*. But, if rightly interpreted, it is meant as the reason why he might expect something more than leaves. One interpreter, has, by a little alteration of the original, made it to signify, that *where he was, was the time of figs*: (a) adding, that this was truly applicable to the Jews, from whom, if from any place in the world, it was reasonable for God to expect some fruit. But it had been very hard for our Sa-  
C viour

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(a) Οὐ γὰρ ἔνι καιρὸς σὺν αὐτῷ. *Nondum enim erat tempus ficuum*. The accent here is to be changed the dente into an aspirate, and read thus, ἔ γὰρ ἔνι, and understanding ἔνι, which is so very frequent, *ubi enim erat, erat tempus ficuum*: *where he was, was the time of figs*. *Knatchbull's annot.* in *Loc. vid.* etiam *Heinsium ap. Estium* in *Loc.* But as *Lightfoot* observes, I question whether with the consent of any one copy in the world. *Harm. vol. op. 1, p. 254.*

viour to have curst the innocent tree, if it had not been, in that place at that time, the season of fruits.

That it might not be surmised, however, that by this sentence any one was a sufferer in his property, Dr. Lightfoot observes, that the tree affected was a tree of common right, which did not belong to any peculiar master, but grew in the common fields, by the road-side. And he gives a solution of the difficulty different from the foregoing: for he rather supposes, that our Saviour might, if it had been the usual time of figs, have gathered them from the trees about him, of which there were many in that place: but, since it was otherwise, all his expectation was from this, which seemed to be of the kind, that never wanted leaves or figs. And to support this opinion, he mentions several kinds of figs, some of which kept their leaves and figs together hanging upon them for two or three years, before the fruit grew ripe. This kind of tree, for instance, such a summer, bore figs, which hung upon the boughs all the following winter: it bore also the next summer again others, which, together with the former, hung on the boughs all this winter too: a third degree, moreover,  
the



the third summer, which brought those of the first bearing to ripeness: and so onwards continually; so that it was at no time to be found without fruit of several years. But this is trying to remove one difficulty by introducing a greater: for St. Mark could never mean to give this reason of his disappointment, that *the time of figs was not yet*, if those figs might be found all the year.

Others, therefore, have found another, and a better, interpretation of St. Mark's words, which does not seem to leave any difficulty remaining: and this is, that *by the time of figs*, may be well understood *the time of gathering them*: and then the words, *for the time of figs was not yet*, refer not to those words immediately foregoing, but to those before, where it is said, that *Jesus seeing a fig-tree, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon*: and he might reasonably expect fruit as well as leaves, because the fig-time, that is, the time when figs were customarily gathered, was not yet. (b)

C 2

Bishop

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(b) Bp. Kidder's Dem. p. 2. p. 38. Καρπὸς σύνταρον, is the time of gathering figs. Thus ὁ καρπὸς τῶν καρπῶν, the time of fruit, Matt. xxi. 34, signifies the time of gathering fruit; which in St. Mark is called *the season*.

Bishop Pearce has adopted this interpretation; and adds to it, that there were, from the double-bearing tree, two seasons for ripe figs; and that it may well be concluded, that in so warm a climate as that of Judea. they would be ripe as early as the passover (considering that their harvest was ripe at that time) and fit therefore for eating at the time, when our Saviour went up to this fig-tree. (c)

Passing on from thence, however, without the refreshment which he seemed to want, he went, according to his custom, into the temple; where he again drove out some traders, who, notwithstanding what he had said and done the day before, had again taken up their usual station for traffic in the sacred place; charging moreover, that no one should carry any burden through the courts of the temple, and adding to what he had before alledged in defence of what he had done, that, as the prophet had foretold, *My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer*; or, as it may rather be translated, *the house of prayer to all nations*;

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(c) See *Miracles of Jesus vindicated by Dr. Pearce*, p. 3.

*nations*; by which he himself prophetically intimated, that the partition-wall, which had hitherto separated the Jews from the Gentiles, was now to be broken down, and that Gentiles as well as Jews were henceforward to be admitted into the same place of worship, and therefore into the same communion with the true worshippers of the father *in spirit and in truth*.

Bishop Hurd remarks, that “some have  
 “imagined, that on this occasion [the pass-  
 “ver immediately preceding his crucifixion,]  
 “this same act was repeated by him on two  
 “several days; but I see no sufficient ground  
 “for that supposition (*d*).” So St. Austin  
 had before looked upon this account in St.  
 Mark to be only a recapitulation of the same  
 fact (*e*). But if we compare the two Evan-  
 gelists, St. Matthew and St. Mark together,  
 we shall see reason to believe that they assign  
 these two transactions to two different days;  
 for St. Matthew certainly mentions the one  
 as done at the time of Jesus’s publick entry,  
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(*d*) Serm. p. 253.

(*e*) De Consens. Evang. l. ii. c. 68.



which St. Mark therefore omits, and he mentions the other as done on the day following, which St. Matthew had omitted. Besides, at the first time, we hear of no notice taken of it by the ruling powers, though they were inwardly offended; but after the second they called him to some account for it. It is, therefore, the most probable, as well as the most general opinion, that this was done by him three times, once at the first passover, and twice at this time. This the present order of the evangelical accounts inclines us to suppose (*f*).

But that this reformation of a publick abuse might not seem to be undertaken by him without a proper commission or authority, he signified to the people, who were then assembled together in great numbers, that this authority was divine; inasmuch as he, who believed on him, believed not on him alone, but on the father who sent him; even as he who saw him, saw the father who had sent him. So eminently were the perfections of the God-head

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(*f*) *Pilkington's Harm. Not. ad Sect. 337.*



head displayed in the person of the son of David.

Bishop Hurd, however, will not allow this to be an act of authority, because the chief-priests drop all the malice of their character, and only ask him, in the way of civil and almost friendly expostulation, *by what authority he did these things?* (g) But surely our Saviour by his answer understood it otherwise, by referring them to the authority of *John the Baptist*, for what he said or did. And that the expostulation was by no means civil or friendly, is evident from what St. Mark and St. Luke both expressly say, that when the Scribes and Chief-Priests heard it, they sought how they might destroy him, Mark xi. 18. The question, indeed, was not put to him till the day after; but then, it is said, that they came to him with the design of entrapping him in his talk. It plainly appears too, that they had now taken offence at him: for from that moment, we are told, they began to meditate his destruction, for thus assuming to himself the authority of opposing what they had permitted. But they were restrained by

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fear,

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(g) Serm. p. 287.

fear, because *all the people were attentive to hear him.*

The learned bishop, indeed, supposes, that if they had taken this opportunity, the people would naturally have been on their side. Not so; for they had no hope of overcoming the prejudice in his favour, and if they had attempted it, they knew that they should fail; so little reason have we to suppose this to be natural, when they could not conceive it to be possible. Besides, the people do not seem to be concerned in this business any further than if they could have understood the spiritual meaning of it, which it does not appear they did. It was no external privilege of their's, which was infringed, but only the convenience of the worshippers, who came from a distance: the act considered in itself, without any further reference, struck at the avarice of the chief-priests, who made their advantage of the market; and there could be no doubt that they would resent it accordingly:

But to return to the narrative.——Our Saviour added, that as this their faith in him would procure an access to the Father; so  
their

their rejection of him and his words would expose them to final condemnation in the day of judgement. For he could declare with truth, that he swerved not in the least tittle, from the commission, which, mutually agreed upon between them, prescribed to him, as man, *what he should say, and what he should speak*: and as that commission was of the utmost importance, not to be undertaken by one, who was not God as well as man, eternal life or eternal death depending upon it, he was careful to speak with all exactness just what he had received in charge from his Father.

Such an earnest address delivered in the name of the Most High, whom he asserted to be his Father, and his consequent making himself in their own sense *equal with God*, raised the indignation of the Scribes and chief-priests higher than before; in so much that they industriously sought occasion, by some means or other, to destroy him. But yet, at the same time that they envied, they feared him; for the people, whom they wished not to offend, were so amazingly struck with the doctrine which he had advanced, thus different from all they had been taught to believe before,



that they were not likely to listen to any proposal, of taking away the life of such an extraordinary teacher.

Jesus knew their thoughts, and therefore that he might not give them any, as yet unreasonable, advantages against his life, by needlessly exasperating them, or by affording them an opportunity of apprehending him secretly, he went, when the evening was approaching, out of the city, and most probably, spent that night in some retired place with his disciples, in meditation and prayer.



## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST took upon him our nature, that he might make a voluntary sacrifice of himself for our sakes; and with our nature, our infirmities, that he might pity those, who are made subject to them: otherwise, he had not hungered, as a man, when *all the beasts of the forest are his*, as a God. But he meant in this to set an example of patience, and an example of thankfulness; of patience, whenever we suffer want, since we endure no more than he did: of thankfulness, when we can recollect, that he endured as much, for our sakes, as we do.

The barren fig-tree deceived his hopes: its flourishing appearance had raised them. A lively emblem this of the Jewish nation, who professed themselves expectants of the promised Messiah, but would not, when he came, receive him.

him: and a lively emblem of all those, who *draw nigh unto God with their mouths*, while *their hearts are far from him*. Empty professions are the leaves: a good life, suitable to good professions, is the fruit: by the former, we may attract the notice of beholders; by the latter only we can satisfy God. To *make a fair shew in the flesh*, and at the same time, to be *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, is such an instance of mock-religion, that each of them is the more disgraced by the other; for a right profession aggravates the condemnation of a wrong conduct; and a wrong conduct discredits the very name of a right profession. Indeed, the bare profession of that, which is good, carries with it an explicit censure upon every thing that is bad.

A parable or a prophecy may be expressed as significantly by actions, as by words: and therefore, when our Saviour cursed the barren fig-tree, it was at once an emblem of what he saw, and a prophecy of what should happen. He saw the semblances of piety in the rigid manners of the Pharisees, but no real sanctity: he foretold the approaching destruction, which such hypocritical pretences would

would deserve and produce, intimating, that as they were like that fig-tree, which had leaves and no fruit; so their end would be similar: to be dried up from the roots, to wither away from being a nation, and to fall under a most remarkable and exemplary curse (*b*).

Instead of indulging a sceptical vanity in starting difficulties about the propriety or impropriety of the action, such as, How could he be so unmerciful, as to curse an innocent tree; or why so unreasonable, as to expect fruit before the season, let us try to improve upon the lesson of instruction it reads. For it contains a warning joined with an admonition, to all, even his bitterest persecutors, to prevent the fearful evils, which he most earnestly wished them to escape; and to secure their everlasting welfare, which he most sincerely desired to promote.—Let it teach us, moreover, not to trust to the *form of godliness*, whilst we are destitute of the *power of it*: nor yet to satisfy ourselves with the strictest observance of the ceremonial part, whilst we but partially perform, or totally neglect the essential:

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(*b*) *Benson's Hist of the Life of Christ*, p. 664.



essential: lest the fatal sentence which this miracle was intended to corroborate, come forth in its full force against us, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* Or lest the heinousness of our guilt be visibly seen in the nature of our suffering, that we have *received the grace of God in vain*. For the sin is, in the course of providence, as in the present instance, generally seen in the punishment.

“The fig-tree, which our Lord cursed, was  
 “in the open field, or by the high-way side:  
 “but we are planted in the church, the vine-  
 “yard of the Lord of Hosts, where more care  
 “is taken to render us fruitful; and there-  
 “fore unfruitfulness in such a situation is a  
 “great and aggravated crime.—This is the  
 “moral of this beautiful parabolical action.  
 “Our Lord cursed a barren fig-tree, that un-  
 “profitable sinners might be led to repent;  
 “and that they, who will not repent, may  
 “learn what their end will be\*.”

By our fruits we shall be best able to judge  
 of our faith. What that faith, which is truly  
 christian

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\* *Benson's bist.* p. 669.



christian, ought to comprehend, our Saviour has taught us in this day's discourse. A belief in him includes a belief in the father; and a belief in the father will draw after it a belief in him; for by seeing him we see the father. The consequence is plain: if we rightly judge ourselves bound in duty to obey the will of God, as far as made known to us by himself; then must we resolve likewise to believe whatever Christ reveals, and to obey whatever he commands, because he is the son of God, sent by Him into the world to preach the glad tidings of eternal life, which was to be conveyed through him. God's providence is our comfort: let Christ's word be our guide; for through him we gain access to the father! he has opened the communication between heaven and earth: our covenant of grace is founded upon this faith: we must honour the son, even as we honour the father, if we would secure an interest in the one, or recommend ourselves to acceptance with the other. Our Saviour himself has pointed out the inseparable connexion between these: *Ye believe in God* and his providence: *Believe also in me*, and my mediation: the former we derive from the acknowledged principles of natural religion; the latter from his revealed will.

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T U E S D A Y.

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## S E C T. I.

## THE NARRATIVE.

Matthew xxi. 20.—xxii. 15. Mark xi. 20.—xix. 1.  
 Luke xx. 1.

ON the Tuesday morning our Saviour went again to Jerusalem; not, as it might seem, to provoke the ruling powers to lay violent hands upon him, or to run into that danger, which he had cautiously avoided the evening before; but that he might spend the day in the temple, where he foreknew the chief-priests and scribes would attend him, not for instruction, but for the baser purpose of insnaring him in his conversation, that they might, if possible, raise against him such an accusation, as might gain the concurrence of the people, who, at present, applauded him and his doctrine too much, to admit of either secret conspiracy, or open violence.

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In the way, the disciples cast their eyes upon the fig-tree, which Jesus had cursed on the preceding day: and *Peter*, in particular, expressed his astonishment at seeing it quite withered away in so short a time. The divine teacher could improve even this trifling observation into some important use. For he takes from thence occasion to infer the efficacy, as well as the duty, of prayer, suggested and accompanied by faith in God, assuring them, that with such previous qualifications, as this comprehended or implied, they not only would be enabled, in the course of their ministry, to perform the most difficult, and even miraculous, exploits (signified by that proverbial expression of *removing a mountain*) but might encourage themselves in applying to the throne of grace for any other assistance, which would be found necessary to confirm the truth of what they were commissioned to teach. This was the substance of their conversation, as they were walking along.

When they were come to Jerusalem, he entered again into the temple, and began, as usual, to instruct the people, who were immediately gathered about him, in such important truths, as related, more especially, to the gospel-dispensation. This gave fresh umbrage



to the chief-priests and elders ; the former of whom presided in the ecclesiastical court, and the latter of whom were judges in the civil courts. Accordingly, they were now contriving, how they might the most easily destroy him, either by finding or representing him obnoxious to the censure of the one or the other : and with this malicious design, which they had fostered in their breasts ever since he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, they came in a body, to try, if they could confound and entangle him, that they might, by some means, expose him as a dangerous impostor.

Their first attack was upon the seemingly unlawful authority, which he had assumed to himself, of reforming such abuses in the temple, as belonged to their province alone, who had permitted the traffic, which he attempted to abolish. They enquire therefore, with a domineering air, by what authority he presumed to do this ? Or, who it was, that gave him this authority ? For that was lodged in the *Sanhedrim*, who had never, it was certain, transferred it to him : produce, therefore, your credentials, that we may judge of them.—But Jesus prudently warded off the question, and reproved the impropriety of their putting it to him, by asking them another



ther in return, which might lead them to the answer of their own : and that was, what opinion they had formed among themselves of the baptism, that is, the ministry of his forerunner, John the Baptist, who, in the great change which he made in religion, claimed to act by a divine commission, and was, by many leading persons among them, acknowledged as a prophet ? *Was it from heaven or of men ?* of divine appointment or a mere imposture ? One of the two it must be : and the answer to this question would resolve theirs.

They were startled at an unexpected demand, which brought them into the disagreeable dilemma, either of acknowledging John's testimony to Christ, if his ministry were from heaven, which they could not but own, or of enraging the populace, who believed him to be a prophet, if they should against their consciences, say, it was of men. And therefore they could, consistently with their credit, or their safety, reply only, that this was a point not yet determined by the great council of the nation, nor could they yet tell to which part of his question they might venture to give their assent ; chusing in this conduct rather to confess their ignorance than to discover their knowledge, though,

though, at the same time they wilfully disguised the truth. This answer left Jesus at liberty, whether he would resolve their enquiry or not: but his question strongly intimated, as they well understood that the authority of both depended upon the same decision.

Finding themselves baffled in this attempt, and moreover stung as they were, with the just rebukes which he gave them in two pointed parables; one, of the two sons, and a second, still more awakening, of the vineyard let out to unfaithful husbandmen, which were purposely levelled, as they sufficiently understood, against the reigning perverseness and obstinacy of these incredulous expounders of the law, they left him with great indignation in their hearts, and with a firm resolution, as soon as they could find an opportunity, to contrive his destruction. At length they persuaded themselves that they had luckily hit upon an expedient which would infallibly expose him to the resentment of the people, who were hitherto prejudiced in his favour, and whose prejudices must be overcome before they could venture to prosecute their malicious schemes.

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They narrowly watched him all that day, and sent spies suborned for this iniquitous purpose, who under the guise of conscientious inquirers would propose a scruple to him, which had, they might pretend, in an affair of the utmost importance to their peace, long perplexed their doubtful minds; and that they might, if possible, insnare him the more effectually, they employed upon this errand men of opposite principles and sects, some of the disciples of the leading men among the Pharisees, who were jealous of the privilege of their country, and some of the Herodians, who were so called from their attachment to the family of Herod, and who were consequently zealous advocates for the interests of the Roman government. These sworn enemies to each other were, upon this occasion, become sworn friends in the deep-laid plot of representing him to be, they did not care which, an enemy to the liberties of the people, or a seditious traitor to the sovereign power.

The question which they proposed was an insidious one, couched under the hypocritical pretence of their having conceived an high opinion of his wisdom and integrity: *Is it*



*lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?* implying in it another, Has he a right to demand it? and intended to draw him either into an acknowledgment of the justness of the demand, which would irritate an oppressed populace against him, as an impostor, and not the Messiah, or else into a denial of the authority that enacted it, which would make him obnoxious to the resentment of an oppressive governor, as a seditious person, and an enemy to *Cæsar*. In either case his life would be, from the foreign tyranny, or the domestic outrage, in danger of being forfeited.

But Christ understood their drift sufficiently to evade the subtilty of both parties, and yet to give no just cause of offence to either. Had he answered nothing, they would have turned the silence against him, as they should have judged it the most likely to exasperate: had he answered affirmatively or negatively, he must have offended the one or the other of the parties, who had combined together to insnare him. But he took a different method. He called for a piece of the tribute-money, and upon its being produced, asked *whose image and superscription it bore?* for it was the determination

mination of their own schools that "wherever the money of any King is current, there the inhabitants acknowledge that King for their Lord:" (a) and yet they maintained, "that, as they were God's people, they were not to own any other as their Lord." Upon their answering, that it was *Cæsar's* image and superscription, he extorted from them the answer, which they wanted: and, by yielding to the premisses, they could not evade the conclusion. But that neither the government nor the people might be disgusted, he admonished them by way of just inference from their own principles, to *render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's*. Thus adjusting the regard due to both, he cautioned the Pharisees against rebellion under the false pretence of religion, and the Herodians against impiety under the specious pretence of loyalty. By which means he decided the matter equitably, yet avoided the imputation from both quarters, either of sacrificing their liberties or opposing their government. The answer was unexceptionable, and so confounded their sanguinary devices, that

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(a) Maimon, on Gezelah, ap. *Lightfoot*, vol. I. p. 230.

that they departed from him with shame and amazement.

When the Sadducees heard, that he had thus silenced both the Pharisees and the Herodians, they undertook in their turn, to puzzle him with a difficulty, which, upon their principles, they thought insuperable. The Sadducees were a set of Jewish free-thinkers, who denied, that there was a resurrection, or a future state of rewards and punishments in the universal world of spirits. This opinion they had hitherto supported by an argument, which none of their most learned opponents could contradict or confute; an argument founded upon the case of a certain family in their neighbourhood, whether real or imaginary is not material, wherein seven brethren had, according to the direction of the Law of Moses, taken the widow of the deceased kindred to wife, as she had been left childless, till last of all the woman herself died also: they would therefore know of him, as he had taught the doctrine of a resurrection, whose wife of the seven she would, at that future day, be accounted, since all seemed to have an equal claim to her in the next world, from having borne an equal relation to her in this: for it was an invincible absurdity that



that this woman should have seven husbands at once, and an equally insuperable difficulty, which of them should have her: they could not, therefore, but imagine that a woman's having been married to so many successively and yet being hereafter wife only to one, was a circumstance that would totally overthrow the belief of such a state. You cannot tell us say they, whose wife she shall be; and therefore we must conclude there is no resurrection.

But Jesus entered into the very depth of this dangerous fallacy, and shewed them withal that it took its rise, from their ignorance of the Scriptures which had delivered this doctrine of another life, and from a misconception of the divine power, which was able to effect what short-sighted man might judge to be impossible. For that they ought to have understood, that though God had in wisdom instituted the rite of marriage for the necessary continuance of a posterity to mortal men in this world; yet in another, that supply could be no longer necessary, since after the resurrection they would become immortal, and therefore could have no need either of marrying or of being given in marriage, in order to perpetuate

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their generation in that world of spirits: so that the very perfection of that incorruptible and exalted state of glory, in which they would become, in this respect, as the angels, was sufficient to remove every difficulty to be urged against the possibility of it.

That he might not however leave any room for the further countenance of such a principle among those who pretended to believe the Scriptures of the Old Testament, at least the five books of Moses, he produced an incontestible evidence for the truth of the resurrection in general, which they thus strenuously denied, from those very books of Moses, by which they were conscientiously guided in the custom of marrying the wife of a deceased brother, that the seed of a family might not fail. For their great lawgiver Moses shewed in the bush, when the Lord, who appeared to him, called himself the *God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, long after their bodies were laid in the grave, and *saw corruption*, that the spirits of those holy Patriarchs were still alive: they had not received the promises, which this high title implied, in this life; and he could not be called the God of them who were finally dead: for the expres-

sion itself, as it signifies an eternal benefactor or protector, was applicable to those only who were yet considered as living: whence they could not but infer, that as those Patriarchs, so all the faithful in all ages, who stand in this relation to God, will for ever live with him.—Some of the Scribes, who were probably of the sect of the Pharisees, commended the reply thus judiciously made to this ill-grounded cavil, and the people in general admired the convincing force of it; insomuch that the Sadducees retired with disappointment and confusion.

But the disputing humour did not yet subside: for when the Pharisees understood that Christ had thus effectually put the quibbling Saducees to silence, they renewed their attack once more, upon a disputable point of great moment, which had never yet been settled among the critical and most learned of their own doctors. It was a matter of nice disquisition, warmly agitated among themselves, *which is the great commandment of the Law?* Some contending strenuously for the institution of the Sabbath: others for the rite of circumcision: others for the law of sacrifices: and many in general, for the ceremonial precepts



in preference to the moral. Whatever answer he gave, they hoped to bring him into disgrace with some or others, who held these different opinions, and would each be incensed against him for differing from their own.

Jesus readily answered the question out of the Law itself; one great and fundamental precept of which was thus delivered in the book of Deuteronomy, the very passage which they first used in reciting the phylacteries, upon which they laid great stress: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, to which all others may well be considered as reducible, if not subordinate, for they are all included in it. And the second is like unto it, as it is to be resolved into the same principle, and is prescribed by the same authority: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these: For indeed it may be said, that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. This is the compendium of the whole Bible, the sum and substance of that whole revelation from heaven, which has been in different ages imparted*

imparted to the world for their instruction in righteousness.

The lawyer who proposed the insidious question, in the name of the whole sect, and came on purpose to insnare him by it, was so struck with the answer, so wisely calculated to avoid all jarring disputes upon points of less moment, and to reconcile every difference of sentiment among them, that he could not but acknowledge the justness of the determination, and join with him in preferring the great duties of piety to God, and benevolence to man, to all the burnt-offerings and sacrifices, however costly or pompous, which other precepts of the law had, not without good reason, prescribed for their occasional observance.

Christ was so well pleased with this discreet comment upon what he quoted from their scriptures, which entered so justly into their spiritual meaning, that he bore honourable testimony to his enlarged sentiments, as they were suggested by a disposition of heart, which might, with a little further instruction, qualify him for a faithful reception of the gospel in its fullest display of the Christian graces. Both the Sadducees and Pharisees were, by

this time, so thoroughly convinced of his superior wisdom, that they *durst not* attempt, afterwards, to ask him any more questions, lest the odium of contempt, which they meant to cast upon him, should fall upon themselves.

After having answered these several questions, without giving the least handle to one party or offence to the other, though he had effectually silenced both, he, in his turn, proposed one to them: *What think ye of the promised Messiah, whom ye expect to come? Whose son is he?* They readily answered, for so they had been taught, that he was undoubtedly to be *the son of David*. True, says he; but then a difficulty arises: *How doth David himself, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in the book of Psalms, call him Lord?* Saying, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand*. If he be the Lord of David, which implies superiority, how can he be his son, which denotes him to be by nature his inferior? Not meaning by this to insnare, but rather to instruct them in a truth which they were unwilling to believe, that Christ the Messiah is the son of God, As God, therefore, he was David's Lord: as man, he was David's son. Upon this account he calls himself, in *Revelations*



*lations* xxii. 16. both *the root and offspring of David*: for Christ as God, was *David's root*: but the same Christ, as man, was *David's offspring*.

The Scribes and Pharisees could not reconcile this seeming contradiction in terms, because they were ignorant of that divine and human nature united in one person, which made the whole consistent; and therefore they did not pretend to *answer him a word*; but henceforward closed all debates with him upon this and every other subject, unable as they found themselves, to gain the least advantage against him.

Jesus having thus confuted all the reasonings and cavils of his malicious opposers, and silenced them still more with his own questions, he turned his discourse to the people, but chiefly to his disciples; admonishing them, notwithstanding the false glosses which they had heard from the Scribes and Pharisees, to *observe and do whatever they taught* out of the law, because they were, by authority, appointed the public teachers and expounders of it: but at the same time, he cautioned them against following their example; for that they did not prac-

tise themselves what they taught others ought to be done. They laid too much stress, for instance, upon the ceremonials of religion, and none, or too little, upon the essentials of it. Then turning from his disciples, he addressed himself, with a becoming courage and authority, to those crafty enemies, who came, as he knew, with the mischievous design of intrapping him in his discourse; and pronounced against them eight woes for the many ill-grounded prejudices, and false notions, which they endeavoured, with so much zeal, to instil into the minds of their deluded hearers, at the peril of their eternal salvation; concluding the whole with that pathetic exclamation, which a foresight of their impending ruin drew from his compassionate heart, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that were sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together under my protection, with the same affectionate tenderness with which a hen doth gather chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Hear then your doom; for it is fixed in the counsels of Heaven: *Behold your house, even this sacred place, in which we are now assembled, is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, as a final farewell, Ye shall not see me henceforth,*

*forth*, not being convinced of the truth concerning me, as the promised Messiah, till ye shall repeat the loud acclamations with which my first appearance in this public character was welcomed, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

The disciples were probably surprized at what he had just hinted about the destruction of the temple; and being desirous of hearing somewhat more about so alarming an event, one of them took that occasion, as he was going away, to point out to him the magnificence of the building, and the various ornaments, that, from time to time, had been bestowed upon it by pious votaries, to beautify the structure, in honour of the God who was worshipped therein, intimating, that it would be great pity to see so strong and stately a building brought to utter desolation. Jesus agreed with them in the observation, that the buildings were indeed splendid and magnificent, but he repeated its doom notwithstanding, in still plainer terms, that its destruction was near at hand; insomuch, that not the least remains of its beauty, not so much as one stone upon another, should be preserved in the demolition. This was an eminent display of



his prophetic character; for this was literally accomplished, when, by command of *Titus*, it was so totally destroyed, that the foundations themselves were digged up: and *Maimonides* tells us, that the temple was ploughed up by *Turnus Rufus*. When, in a subsequent age, by order of *Julian* the apostate, who wished to invalidate the prediction, it was impiously projected to lay the foundation of it again, fire issued miraculously from the bowels of the earth, and consumed the builders, whom he had employed in the attempt.

But that he might dwell the longer upon this interesting topic, understanding, by the surprize the disciples had expressed, that they wished to be further informed about the time and circumstances of the accomplishment of this great revolution in church and state, he retired from the city, and sat down upon the mount *Olivet*, which was over-against the temple, and commanded the best prospect of it: here four of them, who had been admitted into a peculiar degree of confidence and intimacy with him, viz. *Peter*, *James*, *John* and *Andrew*, took the opportunity of asking him privately, when these awful events should happen, and what would be the signs of his coming

coming again to put a final period to the present dispensation, and to establish, upon the ruins of it, his own kingdom, which they still supposed was to be temporal?

Jesus begun with the latter question, by pointing out the signs, that should precede the long-expected deliverance from their present slavery, which they looked for at the appearance of the Messiah, such as the coming of many impostors, under the name of the true Christ and true prophets, who should, by false pretences, deceive the most wary and the best inclined souls. He then proceeded to those more immediate signs, which should likewise precede the near approach of that total destruction he foretold of the whole Jewish city and common-wealth, such as, the profanation of that sacred place, wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilences, ravages and slaughters, fearful sights and prodigies in the heavens, together with such direful persecutions and hardships to be endured by themselves, as would be sufficient to shock the faith, and discourage the perseverance, of any, who were not sensibly supported by a power from high to preserve them from sinking under the weight of their sufferings. The

history of *Josephus*, though no friend to christianity, and of *Tacitus*, though an heathen, confirms the truth of these predictions in every tittle (*b*). Upon this account, however, Jesus admonishes them not to be dismayed; for that such a supernatural assistance should undoubtedly attend them; and notwithstanding all opposition, the gospel of the kingdom, which they would be appointed to propagate, should, through their means, first be preached unto all nations, before the final overthrow of the Jewish establishment should be completed.

The profanation of the temple is singularly expressed by *the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*, referring to the like expression in *Daniel*, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, Dan. ix. 27. Or, as the margin reads it, *with the abominable armies he shall make it desolate*, meaning the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews on account of their ensigns and images; for such, says St. *Chrysostom* (*c*) was every idol and every image. These ensigns  
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(*b*) See *Whitby's* notes on Matt. xxiv.

(*c*) *Chrysostom*, adv. Judæos. Orat. 5.



and images, *Josephus* tells us, were brought into the very temple; and there the Romans sacrificed to them. On this account it is called the abomination; and it is called the abomination of desolation, because this Roman army would lay the city, the country, and the temple desolate. It was to stand in the holy place, and some say, that the effigy of *Titus* was set up in the temple, and the image of an eagle, which was their ensign, was fixed over the temple-gate.

Bishop *Kidder* points out an abomination peculiar to this final destruction of the temple, besides what has been mentioned, which was, "That the sanctuary was then filled with armed men, who were often killed in the holy place, and who, by being brought into the courts of the temple, actually defiled it with the carcases and blood of the slain, which were both of them to the highest degree abominable by the Mosaical law, and was the distinguishing mark of this calamity." (*d*)

To this prophetic sermon, which our Saviour illustrated by several awakening exhortations, he added some apposite parables (those  
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(*d*) See *Kidder's* Dem. of the Messiah, P. 2. p. 11. Not.

of the faithful and wise servant, of the ten virgins, and of the talents) which represented the state of things at the two grand periods, descriptive of each other, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, for the sake of enforcing, more particularly, the duty of watchfulness, which the uncertainty of the latter time, and the certainty of the event would require; and then concluded the whole with a pathetic description of the day of judgment, dwelling upon the solemnity of that appearance, the very words of the respective sentences, that shall then be passed upon the just and unjust, and the everlasting doom of all mankind; subjects, which nothing less than divine knowledge could suggest or explain.

After having spent the day in this most useful and instructive manner, our Lord either returned in the evening to *Bethany*, or staid that night at a friend's house upon the mount. For so St. *Luke* intimates, ch. xxi. 37. that he abode there. But this he might say, though he went to *Bethany*, that town being situated upon the mount (for ch. xix. 29. he calls it *Bethany* at the mount of *Olives*) and it is most probable, that he went thither as usual.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

**T**HIS whole day was full of new occurrences, and every occurrence full of instruction.—The sight of the withered fig-tree suggested the importance and efficacy of faith in God; and the lesson it taught was the same as St. *James* has repeated for general direction in the great duty of prayer, *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, steadfastly believing from his heart, that God is able to grant all that is proper for us to ask, and that he is faithful to make good whatever he has promised to give.* For as certain as the promise is, so confident our faith should be. Prayer is the condition upon which all his promises are insured; and faith is the qualification which will make that prayer effectual. If we pray to a God whom we distrust, we deceive ourselves; and if we pray to one, from whom we do not expect an answer, we mock



mock him. But a lively active faith is able to remove mountains: “for it *justifies* us, and so removes mountains of guilt; it *purifies* the heart, and so removes mountains of corruption.’

The ensnaring questions of the Chief-priests and Scribes give a lively idea of that cavilling humour which still prevails among those who dispute every precept that thwarts their inclination, and every truth, that exceeds their capacity; and who therefore pretend to call in question the authority of the sacred records, because that authority is founded upon credentials of a supernatural kind.

But every attempt of this sort proved unsuccessful, and the subtle quibblers were put to silence. Thus will the holy scriptures for ever maintain their ground against the futile objections of perverse gainsayers, who will feel themselves confuted, though they pretend not to be convinced: and when their impotent raillery is exhausted, without effect, then will the impression of shame, though not of modesty, begin to work.—May this reflection restrain the licentious tongues and libertine principles of those bold wits, who without  
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examination reject the truth, or with superficial enquiry deride it !

The doctrines of the New Testament are confirmed by the revelations of the Old. The truth of the Resurrection, for instance, is no novel tenet, though much improved ; for it was, in some measure, discovered so long ago as in the days of Moses ; and the same law that had prescribed with so much exactness the ceremonial parts of religion, which were to cease, had likewise enjoined, with equal precision, the observance of the moral, which would be perpetual. The Gospel has made no allowances for a partial obedience ; it only dispenses with an *imperfect* one, provided that be *sincere*. The love of God, and of our neighbour comprehends the whole duty of man ; for into the principle that inforces these, every christian grace is resolvable ; and therefore whatever external service is performed, which has no reference to these, though it ought to be done, because God has commanded it ; yet it may as well be left undone, if this motive be not taken into the account.

Let us then no longer dispute which is the great commandment of the law, or which  
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may be looked upon as of little consequence ; since they are all the commandments of God, they are equally important, because they are all stamped with his authority ; and that transgression, which infringes upon his authority in one point, does, in effect, subvert it in all. In this respect, moral precepts and positive institutions are to be put upon the same footing, though, in another, they differ widely. For positive institutions, excepting those of the Sabbath and the Sacraments, may be changeable ; but moral precepts, none excepted, are always binding, and will be invariably the same from the beginning of time to the end of it. In both, however, the rule of conduct, which our Saviour prescribes, is incontestibly the safest, *these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.* He, who has conscientiously adhered to this rule in his devotional addresses to God, and social transactions with man, is *not far from the kingdom of Heaven.*

But there are articles of faith to be believed, as well as rules of practice to be obeyed, before we can become fit subjects of that spiritual kingdom. The mysterious union of the Godhead with Manhood in the same person



person of Christ is one of those articles of Christian faith which is indispensably required of every one who has been admitted into the privileges, or would receive the benefits of the Christian covenant. For if Christ were not God as well as man, the atonement he offered could not be available to the pardon of sinners, since *no man can redeem his brother*; and if he were not man as well as God, that requisite atonement could not have been made. As a God only he could not have laid down his life: as a man only he could not have power to take it again. As both indeed, he might *die for our sins, and rise again for our justification*; but take away either nature, and you destroy the whole scheme of the Christian redemption at once.—Let us then believe and confess it to be the true catholic faith, “that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is perfect God and perfect man; equal to the father as touching his Godhead,” and therefore the Lord of David: “but inferior to the father as touching his manhood,” and therefore the son of David.

If you still think, that there are insurmountable difficulties in conceiving this mystery, which lead you to conclude, that it is incredible

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credible, because it is incomprehensible; I would allow you the premises, but deny the consequence. For there are as great difficulties in accounting for what you do believe, as for this, which you disbelieve. No one, for instance, denies the union of soul and body in his own composition; and yet it is as difficult to say how these are united, as how the two natures are united in Christ. Tell me then how it is, that "the reasonable soul and flesh is one man;" and I will undertake to tell you, by the same means of conviction, how it is, that "God and man is one Christ."

But the Jews had not discovered this mysterious doctrine, and therefore neither could they understand in what sense he could be the Lord of David, and the son of David at the same time. They had not attended enough to their own prophecies to reconcile the seemingly jarring characters of the Messiah's appearance; and from thence arose the delusion which led them by the several steps of a bigotted infatuation to destroy the Lord of life, and still leads the half-informed infidel to deny him.

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That delusion which was thus cruel in itself, could not but prove fatal in its consequences. The same scripture which foretold that *out of Bethlehem Ephratah shall he come forth, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,* (Mic. v. 2.) has likewise foretold, that *Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the Lord's house as the high places of the forest,* (Mic. iii. 12.) This our Lord explained and applied, when he foresaw and foretold the approaching judgment from heaven, which the obstinacy and unbelief of the Jews would quickly draw down upon them. It was, of all others, the most improbable event, that the magnificence and grandeur of their stately temple should be utterly demolished within so short a time as he had pointed, considering the peaceable alliance in which they then lived with the *Romans*, who were to become their bitterest enemies, and the seemingly impregnable strength of their fortified citadel, which had been proof against the violence of attack. But their *destruction was of themselves*. They listened to every wild impostor, who would flatter them in their sinful prejudices; but they rejected him whom God had sent, though he continued,

ed, in spite of their provocations, to importune them, with the offers of life and salvation, to accept the terms upon which they were graciously offered.

Unbelief and impenitence will for ever be attended, in their respective degrees, with the like ruin; yet we will not regard the warning. We are threatened with infinitely more dreadful than the worst of temporal judgements; we are exposed to a danger, which may sink us, soul and body, into endless perdition; yet we will venture to *reject the counsel of God against ourselves*. We venture to *crucify the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame*, by our repeated provocations of his mercy: and we venture to *do despite unto the spirit of grace*, by neglecting the means of salvation which it has prescribed.

In all these respects we go beyond the Jews: for these sinful imputations are the more aggravated, because they are ours, who are blessed with greater light, and yet walk in darkness. We will be saved only in our own way, and upon our own terms, though the gospel has plainly taught us, that God has proposed others. These are as favourable as  
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a God of justice could offer ; and yet we look for allowances of mercy, when we have wilfully transgressed beyond the bounds of them. May we know and consider *in this our day, the things that belong unto our everlasting peace,* before they are *hid from our eyes* : and may the beginning of sorrows, which forebode the more terrible indignation and wrath to come, prevent the sad impenitence, which will bring condemned sinners to wish, and to wish in vain, for those overtures and messages of grace, which they now despise !

*Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.* The prophecies of the Old Testament, though they had an immediate reference to the state and condition of the Jews under the law, yet were generally capable of a double interpretation, by a more distant application to the state and condition of the Church under the Gospel. And in like manner our Saviour couches, under the type of the destruction of Jerusalem, the dissolution of the world, and the general judgement. He foretels at once the signs that would precede the approach of both ; and his design in pointing out each was more to engage *our* caution than to satisfy *their* curiosity, and  
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tended more to prepare our hearts for the consequences of the events that should happen, than to give either them or us a distinct idea of the events themselves. Towards the close he dwells more particularly upon the most important and most awful of all other subjects, in which the whole world would have an eternal interest; and the description of the process of the last judgement is truly awakening and solemn.

The placing of the judge upon the judgement-seat; the appearance of the whole race of mankind before him; the separation that will be made between the righteous and the wicked; the process of the trial; the minute examination of the criminals; the awful sentences that will be severally passed upon each; and finally, the execution of both those sentences; all these, and various other circumstances, which will heighten the solemnity of that great day of the Lord, beyond all that our tongues can express, or hearts conceive, will surely put us upon reflecting, that we are appointed to make up a part of that general assembly; that we shall be summoned to the bar of divine justice, where a strict enquiry will be made into the most secret,

eret, as well as the more open actions, of our past lives; and, that one or other of the sentences, of which Christ has left us a copy, will be our own. If we can read this description, and not be awakened by it, our hearts must be hardened against all impression. No such important motives can be urged, as eternal happiness and eternal misery. If we are indifferent to these, the Gospel has no stronger arguments to offer for the support of its duties; and God himself can offer no stronger for engaging our obedience to his will. May we hear and fear!

“ We know what the articles are, for which we must be accountable at the great day; our thoughts and intentions, as well as our words and actions; for those, which were done in secret, and with the greatest privacy, as well as for those which were done in publick, and in the open view of the world; for the sins which we have done in our own persons, and for what others have done by our countenance, or from the influence of our counsel and example, or what we ought to have prevented or hindered by our power and authority, but did not. All these things will be surveyed and searched into, and weighed

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in an equal balance at that day, that we may receive a proportionable reward or punishment."

"And if so, what ought in reason to be more powerful with us, to beget in us a strict care and conscience of all our thoughts, words, and actions, than this, to reflect, that after a little while, when a few more days or years are over, all that ever we did in this world shall be strictly examined and looked into, and be approved or condemned by the impartial judgement of God? Since we are assured that there is a most exact register kept of our lives and actions, how circumspect ought we to be, *what manner of persons we are in all holy conversation and godliness?*"—Bishop Greene on the four last things.

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W E D N E S D A Y .

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## S E C T. I.

## THE NARRATIVE.

Matt. xxvi. 1. Mark xiv. 1. Luke xxi. 38.

SOME have imagined that our Saviour took his final leave of the temple, after he had, on the foregoing day, foretold the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and expressed his concern for that lurking, that obstinate infidelity, which would bring down upon it this heavy judgement. Others, therefore, have supposed, that he did not go into the city on this day, but spent the whole of it at Bethany, in instructing his disciples, and preparing himself for his approaching death. But when we observe, that St. Luke, immediately after the mention of his abode in the Mount of Olives on the last night, adds, *that all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple for to hear him*, it will appear more than probable that he was

preaching there, as on the other days, for some time, though not the whole day ; and that he afterwards retired again to Bethany, that he might avoid any tumult, which might in all likelihood have been raised about him ; for now the great council of the nation were assembled at the house of *Caiaphas* the high-priest, that they might consult with the chief-priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, how they might contrive to take him by some secret stratagem, and put him to death.

Part of this day he spent at the house of one Simon the Leper, who had probably been healed by him of that noisome distemper. While he sat at meat there, a certain woman, whom many suppose to have been Mary the sister of Lazarus, being desirous once more to testify her love and regard for her Lord and master, brought an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head. This seeming profuseness of what was so costly now raised the indignation of some of the disciples, as the like transaction had offended Judas before ; for they joined with him in the same unfavourable remonstrance, which he had urged from a sordid principle of covetousness,



tousness, under the spacious pretext of charity, that it might as well have been sold for a considerable sum of money, instead of being thus wasted unnecessarily, and been given to the poor. But Jesus, who knew her motive, undertook her defence, and to her unspeakable satisfaction declared, that this pious action should be recorded in the gospel, for a perpetual memorial of her zealous attachment to her dying Saviour.

Some of the harmonists have confounded this with a similar occurrence mentioned by St. Luke in a former part of his Gospel, (ch. vii. 36.) which happened too at the house of one Simon, and was performed by a woman, named Mary. But it ought to be considered, that this was done at Bethany, only two days before he suffered; but the other, in all probability, in the neighbourhood, if not in the town of Nain, whilst he was travelling from place to place. That was at the house of Simon the pharisee: this at the house of Simon the leper. There a woman anointed his feet; here the ointment was poured upon his head. One of the women is characterised as a sinner; the other has nothing criminal laid to her charge; and

if it were Lazarus's sister, we have all the reason in the world to judge that no charge of criminality lay against her. But perhaps neither was she the person who did this good deed. There is, indeed, an account given by St. John of Jesus's being anointed in Lazarus's house, and by his sister Mary; but neither can that well be confounded with this; for the places were different, and it is probable too that all the three women were different, for Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned as one, Jesus knew, having cast seven devils out of her: he knew also Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and that she was no notorious sinner; but it no where appears, that he knew any thing of this woman, till she came to him upon this business. From all which we cannot but conclude, against the generality of harmonists, that the transactions are not the same, and that this woman was neither Mary Magdalene, nor Mary the sister of Lazarus, but some one, whose name is not recorded.

After supper, Jesus rose from the table, and laying aside his upper garment, as servants were used to do, when they were attending on their masters, girded himself with a towel, poured water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet. Several commentators have placed

placed this transaction after the celebration of the passover, at the last supper on the Thursday evening; but the circumstances of the time and place will evince, that this could not be, and that it is more than probable this was the same supper with that mentioned, John xiii. which is expressly said to be before the feast of the passover. That it was not at the last or paschal supper is evident, because it is related as an occurrence which happened before any preparation was made for it; otherwise the disciples could not have understood what our Saviour said to Judas, *That thou doest, do quickly*, as if it implied, that he should buy those things, which they had need of for the feast: from whence it is certain, that it was before he had given orders to Peter and John for that purpose. Besides, Judas had received the sop, and his agreement was made with the chief-priests before the paschal-supper; for after it, it would have been too late, and the time too short to muster up so large a company, as were gathered together to apprehend him. What our Saviour now says of Judas's treachery is different from what passed at the paschal supper; for now John asks him privately about the person, who was to betray him, and he privately, without the

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knowledge of the other disciples, gives him a token by a sop; but then Judas himself asks, and Christ answers him openly, and by as plain a signal points him out: *he that dippeth with me in the dish, the same shall betray me*; and the hand of Judas, as some think, was at that very moment in the dish. That it was the same supper which St. John mentions (ch. xiii.) before the passover, appears likewise from the concurrent circumstances of its being at Bethany, and two days before the passover inclusively; whereas St. John speaks not a word here of the paschal supper, nor does the order of the history in any other of the Evangelists admit of such a supposition (a).

The disciples did not in the least comprehend the meaning of such an extraordinary instance of condescension; and therefore Peter, when it came to his turn, utterly refused to submit to the desire expressed of performing so mean an office for him as that of washing his feet, till Jesus informed him, that there was some spiritual meaning in this act of humility, which he did not seem to understand

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(a) See Lightfoot, vol. I. p. 258, and vol. II. p. 253.



derstand at present, for that unless he were washed, in a sense which he did not yet choose to explain to him, he could have no part in David nor any inheritance in the son of David.

Peter was struck by so awful an admonition, and considering it now as a token of securing an interest in him, he cried out, with a warmth of affection, which was the genuine result of his natural temper, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head*; that every part of me, thus cleansed from pollution by thy benevolent hand, and purified by thy sanctified grace, may be devoted, as it ought, to thy service. Jesus, however, bore testimony to the sincerity of their pious intentions, by declaring, that this degree of cleansing, which he thus emblematically designed for doctrine and instruction, was sufficient for them, who were, in a great measure, free from the pollutions of sin, which had defiled the hearts of others, for that they were thus spiritually clean already; but he added with a significant exception, *not all*.

This he quickly explained; for no sooner had he made the exception, than he informed

them, with concern, that one of them, who were then present with him, even one of his chosen companions, should be vile enough to betray him into the hands of those enemies, who sought his life. Peter was alarmed at such an open declaration of treacherous baseness among themselves, who looked upon each other as brethren; and each of them probably looked upon one another with some self-confidence, though not without mutual jealousy; and as they could sooner distrust their own hearts, than suspect their master's veracity, were anxiously inquisitive about the person of the traitor; desiring John, who sat next to him at the table, that he would ask privately, who was likely to be guilty of the horrid deed. Jesus answered him as privately, that he would point out the delinquent by giving him a sop, after he had dipped it; and accordingly he gave it to Judas; adding, in a direct application to him, perhaps with some scorn and indignation, which Judas might now begin to feel (for Satan immediately entered into him, by suggesting the wicked thought) *what thou doest do quickly.*

This none of them understood, excepting St. John, who had asked the question, but  
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could not think himself at liberty to divulge a token thus given to him in confidence; and therefore, without suspecting any reference to his approaching destiny, they supposed only, that as Judas had the common purse, which was to supply them with all necessaries, during their stay at Jerusalem, their master meant to give him directions about the immediate requisites for keeping the feast, or that he wished to have something allowed from their little stock to furnish the poor with some present accommodation. Judas, however, gave way to the first impulse of Satan (for who but he, whom Satan had seduced, could have engaged in such an iniquitous attempt?) and immediately left the room; which the rest of the disciples might interpret a readiness in him to obey his master's order, though it was at some distance from the city, and in the evening. Upon this, Jesus exhorted his disciples to mutual love and friendship, in the terms of a departing friend; and then forewarned Peter, who was the most forward to express his inviolable attachment to his Lord, that notwithstanding all his zealous professions of unshaken fidelity, he would, within a short time, deny that he even knew him.

This circumstance has induced some to imagine, that this supper was no other than the paschal supper, because in St. John xiii. 38, our Saviour's expression is said to be, *the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice*, which, say they, implies, that it was to be on that very night. But, as Dr. Lightfoot answers the conjecture, it may be observed that Peter denied Christ but once before the cock crew (Mark xiv. 68, 69, 70); so that our Saviour's meaning here must be, not that he should deny him three times before any cock crew again, but that he should deny him thrice within the time of cock-crowing, which was the fourth part of the night; whether of that or of any other is not yet said. And that this is the meaning, is still more evident from Mark xiv. 30, where it is said, *the cock shall not crow twice*.—Besides, in St. John's account of this supper it is only said, *the cock shall not crow*; but in Matthew and Mark, as we shall see afterwards, when it refers to the very night, when his denial was, after the paschal-supper, it is said, *this night, before the cock-crow*. Whence it is to be understood, that Christ forewarns him of this at two different times; first, at this supper at Bethany, on the Wednesday evening,



evening, and there the emphasis lies on the word *thrice*, and next, at the passover-supper, when Christ puts it upon the words, *this night (b)!*

In the mean time the great council of the nation were assembled at the house of Caiaphas the high-priest, where they had been consulting a great part of the day with the scribes and chief-priests, how they might take Jesus by some secret stratagem, and put him to death. This was the second council which they held upon this occasion, and they hoped now to be able to form some resolution that would effectually answer their purpose: but yet they could not think it safe to put their resolves into execution on the feast-day, when the concourse was so great, lest they should raise a tumult among the people, who held him in the highest veneration, on account of his preaching, and whose strength, as well as resolution, they feared, might be great enough to rescue him out of their hands (c).

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(b) See Lightfoot, vol. I. p. 259.

(c) The time when Judas thus betrayed him is hinted in the particle τότε, *then*, viz. according to the tradition

In the midst of these debates and perplexities Judas came into their assembly, and put an end to all their difficulties by offering his assistance for the purpose, if they would but engage to reward him properly for the undertaking, which he could contrive to effect in the absence of the multitude, and promising to deliver him into their power without the least disturbance; for that he knew, as he had been a constant attendant upon him, where

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tradition of the church, the consultation of the Sanhedrim with him, and his agreement to betray Christ to them which was on Wednesday, this being assigned as one reason why they fasted on Wednesday and Friday, because Christ was betrayed on Wednesday, and he suffered on Friday, *Whitby* on Matt. xxvi. 14.—After St. Luke had given the account of the sop, and of Judas's consulting with the chief-priests and with the soldiers how he might deliver him unto them, it follows, Luke xxii. 7. *Then came the days of unleavened bread*; whence it is plain, that this sop was not given, as some have imagined, at the passover-supper, for then the phrase is varied, *he that dippeth with me in the dish*. Besides, the sop was a private sign, known only to St. John; but the other was open, after he had had the effrontery to ask, *is it I?*

V, *Whitby's App. to Mark xiv. p. 315.*

where it was that he usually retired, and could therefore, better than any other, find a suitable opportunity, which he would signify to them, to betray him privately.

Little could they dream of such a favourable proposal, and much less, that it should come from one of his own disciples, who all seemed to be inviolably attached to him and his interest. But without considering at all whether they might safely trust him or not in so important an enterprize, they closed eagerly with the first offer, and immediately bargained with him for thirty pieces of silver, amounting only to three pounds fifteen shillings of our money; the usual price for slaves at that time (*d*). This *Judas* readily accepted; and from that time forward, he sought for the most convenient opportunity of betraying him, and in the most convenient manner.

After the whole scheme was concerted, and most probably the time as well as the manner fixed upon for apprehending him, *Judas* returned to his master and his fellow disciples,

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(*d*) The very price specified by the prophet *Zachariah*, xi. 12. for the wages of the good Shepherd.

as composed, as if he had not been engaged in any iniquitous transaction against him ; and as if he were not at all sensible, that his Lord, notwithstanding the many proofs he had given of supernatural knowledge, might know, that he had been contriving this plot to take away his life. The disciples took no notice of his absence, from the persuasion which they had before conceived, of his having been sent to provide what was necessary against the feast ; and Jesus, without upbraiding him for it, admitted him into the same intimate fellowship as before ; and, without doubt, spent the time he was with them in preparing the minds of his disciples for that awful event, which he himself foresaw in all its circumstances of horror.

But he could look beyond the valley of the shadow of death, and behold his triumph over it before the attack. Nevertheless, he was troubled in spirit at the foresight of Judas's treachery : but instead of discovering his feelings, he cheerfully discoursed with his disciples about the glorious consequences that would ensue from the basest designs. *Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself,*



*self, and shall straightway glorify him.* This was what the disciples did not at that time comprehend, and he did not judge it proper to be more explicit upon the subject; for the occurrences of the following days would give them a thorough insight into the whole plan, as it was formed in the counsels of Heaven.

## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

**I**T has been said, that only a general account of this day's transactions is given by the Evangelists; nay, some have gone so far as to say, that they have left none: but short as the account is, or may appear to be, it will supply us with abundant matter of serious meditation.

When we read of this early attendance of the people in the temple, we cannot but admire the unremitting vigour of the preacher, and the fervent devotion of the hearers. It was *David's* pious resolution, and it was his daily practice, *My voice shalt thou hear betimes, O Lord, early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*—*Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might be occupied in thy word.*—If we are indeed in earnest in the exercises of devotion, we shall not suffer the unseasonable slumbers of the morning  
to

prevent us in our attendance upon them : much less shall we scruple to deny ourselves the indulgence of unnecessary sleep, that we may be ready to obey our summons to the house of God, at the stated hour of prayer.

In the morning we are in the best frame of mind for this heavenly communion with our God ; for our spirits are then revived by the refreshment of the night, and not yet perplexed with the cares or business of the day. We are naturally composed to devotion by the solemn appearance of the light : and the divine instruction that we shall then receive, leaves an impression upon the heart, which worldly thoughts, tho' they are apt to crowd in too quickly upon us, are not likely to efface. But besides this, we have, at that time, the greatest need of applying ourselves to this, which is, at all times, our indispensable duty ; for we are soon to be exposed to we know not what dangers or temptations of the approaching day ; and therefore we are more especially concerned to guard ourselves against the violence of their attacks, by begging fresh supplies of grace from above, which nothing but prayer, founded upon faith in Christ, can procure.

Our

Our acknowledgements to him, who has graciously undertaken to forward our prayers, can never be sufficiently expressed by all we offer. We should scorn to sacrifice unto him of that which will cost us nothing. Our most precious ointment, our most valuable substance is well bestowed upon him, who has not thought it too much to lay down his life for our sakes. And if any particularly friendly offices, shewn to a departed friend, are recorded to our credit in the minds of survivors, what encouragement have we to express the kindest affection for the dying Saviour of the world, when we are assured, that for every such testimony of piety and love to him and his cause, our names shall be recorded in the book of life!

One of the best testimonies we can give of our love to him, he has graciously told us, will be expressed by our readiness to *serve one another in love. We have the poor always with us, and whensoever we will, we may do them good.* But let us not imagine, that this distribution of our good things will alone be sufficient to *cover a multitude of sins*: our chief motive to all such benevolent actions must be, that they are members of Christ our head;  
and



and our charity must accordingly spring from a pious disposition of regard to our Redeemer; otherwise, however extensive in its influence or effects, it will *profit us nothing*.

Our greatest charity will be shewn in an affectionate tenderness to the souls of our brethren. The best of us are polluted with the stains of corruption, which require some pains of our own, and some assistance from above, to wipe them off. Christ is said to have *washed us from our sins in his own blood*. Let us apply the merits of it to ourselves; and let us learn from his example, as well as his precepts, after we are cleansed from our own sins by the purifying grace of his spirit, to recommend the application of it to others. This it is, in a figure, *to wash one another's feet*; to stoop to the meanest offices of love and benevolence, if by that means we can save a soul; that, we with them, and they with us, may, with mutual rejoicing, *be presented spotless before the throne of grace*: when the pure in heart shall see God; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But in every society of men, however small, there will be some unworthy of being admitted

admitted into it. Even in the *goodly fellowship of the Apostles* there was a traitor; not unknown indeed to Christ, for this was predetermined by the wisdom of God, and foretold by his prophets; but such an one may be disguised, and therefore unsuspected by his more upright brethren. Let not the credit of religion suffer, because some of its professors may be false. That forbids hypocrisy in the severest terms, and condemns the hypocrite, as the vilest of sinners: surely then it will not justly bear the blame of that, by which it declares itself most highly disgraced. It is our comfort, however, that there is a society still remaining, in which there are no false brethren. Let it be our chief concern to gain admittance there.

Happy had it been for the Chief-priests of the Jewish synagogue, if they had spent but half that time and thought upon the means of procuring their own salvation, which they misemployed upon contriving the destruction of an innocent sufferer. Our blessed Lord was unweariedly intent upon *doing good*, while they were no less intent upon devising mischief. But innocence is not always a sufficient security against suffering; nor is suffering an undeniable argument for guilt. It weighs no-  
thing

thing with the malicious or ill-disposed heart, that the object of dislike or hatred is free from the blemishes that contaminates itself. The reproach thrown by such a character upon abandoned principles and immoral lives, serves only to quicken resentment the more: and if he has been faithful enough, in the discharge of his duty, to *tell the truth*, he is sure of being accounted *an enemy for this*. Let such *sinners in Zion* look into the wicked councils of the Chief-priests and Rulers; and let them tremble to consider how nearly their own malevolent inclinations resemble theirs.

That ever such infamous wretches should be found, who are daily *fed by the bread that cometh down from Heaven*, and yet are insolently *lifting up their heels* against the Majesty of Heaven! They commune with the enemies of God, that they may with their joint forces fight against God: and when the wicked conspiracy, thus begun by the instigation of the Devil, is settled between the parties, who have both *sold themselves to do evil*, at how cheap a rate do they barter away their precious souls! The momentary indulgence of a sinful appetite, or the flattering prospect of a  
little

little unjust gain will tempt them meanly to betray their master, to wound their consciences, and damn their souls.

If they have been graciously admitted into covenant with him, or they have been blessed with the opportunity of hearing his word, their guilt rises in proportion to their privileges. It is in the power of every evil seducer to frustrate the intentions or advice of their best instructors : and the communications of such insinuating companions, if they should be unhappily linked together with such as have no religion, will not fail to extinguish the small remains of their's.

Little do either they or their companions consider, that wherever they are, or whatever they are pursuing, still the eye of Christ can follow them : and although, like *Judas*, they shall, immediately after the committing of iniquity, return to the congregation of the faithful, and join with them in the most solemn duties of the sanctuary, yet he is *not* mocked. He can distinguish the traitor, under the disguise of a friend. What wicked men have done, what they intend to do, is known unto him. They believe this, they confess



it, and yet they sin on as securely, as if *no eye could see them*. If their faces are but as deceitful as their hearts, they hope to be secret, and are then emboldened to be false. They can preserve a fair appearance, and by that men will judge : but it is no concern of their's how foul is the inside, for of that men cannot judge. Indeed, the searcher of hearts discovers the most hidden villainy ; but they will flatter themselves, that if he should not prevent, it may be, he will not punish it ; *therefore their hearts are fully set in them to do evil*.

*Foolish and unwise !* Do ye not know, that God will be glorified in that son, whom ye betray by casting his words behind you ? Know ye not, that he, who submitted to an ignominious death for the sake of sinners, will one day be exalted upon a throne of judgement, to the utter confusion of those his enemies, who crucify him afresh by their repeated provocations ? Or, know ye not, that although he shall suffer the *wheat and the tares*, the sincere and the hypocrites, *to grow together until the harvest*, yet at that great discriminating day of tryal, he will effectually *discern between the righteous and the wicked ; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not ?*

T H U R S D A Y.

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# T H U R S D A Y.

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## S E C T. I.

### THE NARRATIVE.

Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xiv, &c.

**T**HIS was the first day of unleavened bread, on which, according to the precept of the law, the paschal lamb was to be killed: that great feast, which was instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and in thankful acknowledgement of the destroying angel passing over their houses, when the first-born was found slain in every house of the Egyptians.

In the morning, the disciples, knowing how punctual their master was in fulfilling all righteousness, and much more in observing this great solemnity with all due strictness of devotion, desired to know at what house they should

should make the necessary preparation for eating the passover, or where the paschal lamb should be got ready for him: for Dr. *Lightfoot* observes, that it might be eaten any where, since the houses in *Jerusalem* were not to be hired, but during the time of the feast, of common right (a). *Jesus* knew what was in man, and foreknew who were his, and who were worthy. He could therefore, without hesitation, direct them where they would find a welcome reception. Accordingly, he sent two of them, *Peter* and *John*, to *Jerusalem*, with an assurance, that as soon as they entered into the city, they would meet with a man, bearing a pitcher of water (as it might seem by accident, but in reality, by the appointment of Heaven): Him they might follow into the very house, which should supply them with all things needful for their accommodation; for, upon their only telling the good man of the house, that the master had sent them to enquire for a room that might conveniently receive them and his twelve disciples, at the passover-supper, he would immediately shew them a large upper-room furnished and prepared for the purpose,

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where

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(a) *Lightfoot*, vol. II. p. 255.

where they might make all things ready for him against his arrival.

The same disciples, who had lately been sent upon as extraordinary an errand, and found an ass tyed with a colt exactly in the place which he had described, could not doubt but that they should succeed as well in this second embassy, which could not depend upon human foresight. Whereupon they went with a kind of patriarchal faith, *not knowing whither they went*, trusting in his word, whose direction they implicitly followed. They came into the city, and found all things to happen just as he had foretold. They saw the man carrying the pitcher of water : they followed him into the house, and upon delivering their message to the master of the house, who was probably a friend or follower of Jesus, he shewed them a convenient room, properly furnished with every necessary accommodation, and granted them the free use of all things without the least scruple. Nothing, therefore, was left for them to do, but to provide a lamb ; and having slain it, as was prescribed, in the temple, sprinkled the blood on the altar, and prepared all other things necessary for the celebration



celebration of the paschal supper, they returned to their master.

Part of the message which they were to carry was, that his time was at hand; intimating, that this passover would be the last he should live to celebrate; and as he had hinted before, that his removal from hence would be by some violent and untimely death, the disciples, who had been formerly elated by the imagination of temporal grandeur and pomp, were now depressed by the apprehension of some approaching shock, which would put an end to all their flattering hopes and views.

Jesus perceiving this, before his departure to *Jerusalem*, exhorted them affectionately not to give way to such a dejection of spirit, because he was about to leave them defenceless to the incensed power and malicious persecutions of the world, who were, upon principle, his and their avowed enemies; for that they might bring comfort to themselves, with a belief in God and in him, from accustoming themselves to look forward to the better hopes of a better world. He could assure them, that *in his father's house*, from whence he came, and whither he was going, *there are many mansions*

of bliss appointed for the reception of faithful souls (a truth which he had all along endeavoured to fix in their minds) and that *if it were not so*, he would not have flattered them with such a delusion. That he was actually *going before to prepare that place of never-fading glory for them*; and still more to confirm them in the expectation of it, he promised to *come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they might be with him, to dwell together in the strictest union of love and friendship through eternal ages.*

The frequent mention of his departure put St. Peter upon enquiring whither it was that he meant to go, for he professed, that he wished to follow him wherever it was. Jesus told him, that that was impossible at present, but it would happen, that he should *follow him afterwards*, meaning, in his sufferings for his and the gospel's sake. Peter replied, in the warmth of his zeal, *Why not now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.* Jesus corrected him in this, though he knew that, in time, he would be enabled to do it. Be not too sanguine, at present, in your professions of friendship for me, or too confident of your own strength; for I tell you, though you suspect it  
not,

not, that *the cock will not crow, till thou hast thrice denied that thou knowest me.*

Notwithstanding all the assurances he had given them of spiritual comforts, the disciples could not yet divest themselves of all hopes, that this his state of exaltation would be in the establishment of a temporal kingdom, wherein they, his constant adherents, might reign with him: and therefore *Thomas*, whose ideas were as gross and worldly as those of the rest, upon hearing what he said about his departure, and wanting to be still further satisfied in so interesting a point, said unto him, with this oblique view, *Lord, you have never yet expressly told us, whither you are going, or where your father's house is, and how then can we possibly know the way thither?*

Jesus, understanding his mistaken notions, repeated what he had said once before, that he had pointed out the way to them, and that he himself was the way, and the truth, and the life; for that he came down from the heavenly regions on purpose to guide them, by his example and his doctrine, in the way thither; that none but they who would submit with a religious faith to his instructions, could hope

to gain access to the father, and that the various manifestations of the divine presence, which they had, from time to time, seen in him, were sufficient to convince them, that whoever knew him as they ought, knew the father likewise; for he was *the express image of his person*.

*Philip*, either misunderstanding his meaning, as the others had done, or being too eager in applying it, as they did, said unto him with some earnestness, *Lord, shew us the father*, either by some visible representation of his glory, or by bringing us to the sight and enjoyment of him, and we desire no more. Jesus replied, as it might seem by way of reproof, and still in pursuance of the same conclusion from the same premisses, *Have I been so long time with you, speaking as never man spake, and doing such works, as none other man ever did, yet hast thou not known me, nor yet understood, even from such evident displays of divinity, that he who has seen me, has in effect seen the father?* For by this you cannot but be convinced of what I have so often affirmed, that *I am in the father, and the father in me*, by an inseparable union of nature and essence.

But



Büt if this be not fufficient, you fhall have, if poffible, a ftill more convincing proof of this truth, and that from yourfelves; for you fhall be enabled, through a firm belief in me and my words, not only to do the works that I have done, but, in fome refpects, even greater works than thefe (alluding moft probably to the miraculous-gift of tongues upon the defcent of the holy ghof, ) *becaufe I go to the father*, and fhall prevail with him to *send you another comforter*, or advocate, who will not leave you again, as I muft, but will be prefent, as if he dwelt with you and in you, by the influence of his grace, and a free communication of his fpiritual gifts, for ever.

To comfort the difciples ftill more during their orphan ftate, he promifes, that after his converfing with the world, and departing out of it, he would appear to them again; and that they fhould then know and underftand, by the moft convincing tokens, that he was in the father by an ineffable union, and they in him by an indiffoluble connection; fuch as the allurements of the world fhould not weaken, nor the perfecutions of the world deftroy: for the keeping of his commandments, which

is in every one's power, is the infallible bond, by which this connection would be preserved entire.

Upon this, *Jude*, whose thoughts, like those of the rest, were taken up with the flattering expectations of a temporal kingdom, interposed with surprize, and asked him, *How it was, that he would manifest himself unto them only, and not upon the public theatre of the world; for such a private appearance of royal dignity as this, would be inconsistent with all their views at his royal investiture?* Jesus informed him, and by the information corrected his mistaken notions, that this did not relate to any visible appearance of his godhead or royalty, but to that spiritual communication of his everlasting benefits, which they alone, who love him and keep his commandments, could receive. To such his holy spirit would disclose the whole will of his father, for the edification of his church, and their own instruction in righteousness, the means of grace, and the hopes of glory.

Then, as an affectionate farewell, he leaves with them the bequest of his peace, the most important of all blessings, which the world  
could

could neither give nor take away; the spring of all present and eternal bliss, with which they might possess their souls in patience, and which would preserve their souls to all eternity. Upon finishing this conversation, consisting of admonition, instruction, and comfort, which took up the greatest part of the day, he called upon them to *arise*, for that it was now time to go *from thence to Jerusalem*.

Dr. *Benson*, and some others before him, have placed this discourse with the disciples, after the celebration of the passover, when they had finished the supper, and were going to mount *Olivet* on the Thursday evening. But this mistake seems to have arisen from their having confounded the conclusion of this discourse, *Arise, and let us go hence*, referring to his final departure from *Bethany*, with what he says, when he leaves the guest-chamber, and passed over the brook *Kedron*; which were evidently spoken at two different times; for at the last he adds, *Behold he that betrayeth me is at hand*, which it is not likely he would say before that time, when *Judas* was with him, and continued with him till the last supper was over (*b*).

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Towards

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(*b*) See *Lightfoot's* works, vol. I. p. 260.

Towards the evening, after the sun was set, which was the appointed time for celebrating the passover, Jesus and his disciples arrived at the house in Jerusalem, that was prepared for their reception; which was, in the opinion of some, the house of John, whose surname was Mark, an admirer of Christ's doctrine, if not then one of his disciples. At the usual hour, when it was dark, Jesus sat down at the table, with his twelve apostles; and that he might express the fervency of that affection, which he had always shewn for them, in this last intercourse he told them that he had most earnestly *desired to eat this passover with them*, because he knew it would be the last that he should ever celebrate before his death; for that was now so near at hand, that he could add *he should no more eat of it*, nor indeed of any thing else, until the ordinance itself, which was but a type, should be superseded by another institution, which, under the gospel (the kingdom of his father) should be substituted in its room.

After having said thus much, he took the cup of wine, with which the master of the family was used to begin the feast; and when, according to the custom, he had solemnly  
blessed



blesed it, which was by giving thanks unto God for that deliverance of Israel, in remembrance of which the passover was ordained, *he gave it to them*, and desired them to *divide it among themselves*; herein distinguishing it from the sacramental cup, which he took afterwards, and put it separately into each one's hand.

When they had begun the supper Jesus a second time apprised his disciples of what must alarm them all, excepting the vile wretch himself, who was conscious of the confederacy entered into with the chief-priests on the preceding night, *that one of them*, who were partaking with him in that commemorative feast *should betray him*. Well might they, who knew themselves innocent of such a base design, enquire with some mutual jealousies, and yet with a seeming distrust too, becoming those who are fearful of falling by surprize, as they did, one by one, *Lord, is it I?* (though he had at a former supper privately signified to *John*, in confidence who it was;) but with what inconceivable effrontery must the guilty traitor himself be supposed to ask the same question with the rest? And with what confusion

fusion of face must he receive the answer from the mouth of the destined victim, *Thou hast said!*

Nevertheless, he still continued at the table, and at the conclusion of the supper, when the ceremony of eating the paschal lamb was finished, it was the proper time for our Saviour to introduce a new sacrament, instead of the other which was to give way to it, in commemoration of a still greater deliverance than that which had been commemorated, even the redemption of the whole world from the thralldom of sin and Satan: and that he might make use of the most significant emblems for this purpose, *he took bread*, which he had before in a figure called his body, *and gave thanks, and blessed it*, or implored the blessing of Heaven upon it, and upon the institution itself, that a blessing might for ever be derived upon it; *and breaking it*, he gave a piece of it to each of his disciples, *and said, Take, eat, this is my body*, or it is the visible representation of my body, *which is*, in the decree of the almighty father, *given for you*, and is now quickly to be mangled for the sake of the world; therefore continue, in your religious assemblies, to keep up the devout commemoration of

of

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of this my dying love, by *doing this*, or repeating this sacramental act, *in remembrance of me.*

In like manner, after the paschal supper, *he took the cup*, and *giving thanks* as before, or joining thanksgiving with a prayer, by which again he invoked the blessing of Heaven, *he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this wine*, for it is the representation of my blood (which in a figure he had before called *drink indeed*) and it is the appointed seal and sanction of the new covenant that is about to be established between God and Man, by the shedding of my blood; the great ransom that is to be paid, by the gracious appointment of Heaven, for the remission of sins: intimating by the time, the place, and the manner of the whole transaction, that the bread now emblematically represented his body, as the paschal lamb typically prefigured it before, and that the wine was now *his blood of the New Testament*, in the same figurative sense, as *the blood of bulls and of goats* had been under the old. \*

Just at this instant, while they were in the room together, a very unseasonable contention  
arose

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\* Comp. *Exod.* xxiv. with *Heb.* ix.

arose among the Apostles about precedency ; but Jesus corrected them by pointing out the difference between the condition of His subjects, and that of the subjects of the kings of this world, who, from the nature of their dominion, exercise an authority over their inferiors ; whereas he had appeared among them in the meanest capacity, and they were to learn from him, that if there were any difference of station among them, the greatest should so demean himself, as to become the least : he adds, however, as an encouragement to perseverance, and as a reward of their steadfastness, that he would appoint them a kingdom, as his father had appointed him, wherein they should support a most exalted character, even that of sitting upon thrones, and judging the twelve tribes of *Israel*.

St. *Luke's* words are, *He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger*. Whence it is naturally to be understood, that the former word *greatest*, as well as the latter, respects the age ; and therefore it is probably conjectured, that some one among them had been challenging some privilege or primacy to himself on account of seniority. *Peter*, it is supposed, was the oldest, and therefore sat in  
the



the uppermost place at the table, on one side of our Lord, whose discourses were, for this reason, directed so immediately to him, and his answers to Christ were taken in the name of the rest; and therefore there is some room to suspect, that he was the chief in this contention, and that it was in all likelihood between him and the two sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*, who appear before, through their mother, to have presumed too much upon the marks of favour, with which Christ had peculiarly distinguished them, not perhaps without the jealousy of *Peter*, who, though he could not claim a primacy to himself, yet wanted from his seniority to assume a precedency. (c) But our Saviour's answer forbids us to understand that any such superiority was ever granted to him.

Then, turning to *Peter*, partly with a rebuke for this ill-timed dispute, and partly because he had professed his attachment to him in the strongest terms, Jesus forewarned him of the danger to which both he and the rest would be exposed, through the destructive insinuations

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(c) See *Lightfoot* on *Luke* xxii. ver. 26.

tions of Satan, but that he had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail in the hour of trial: foreseeing, however, that his faith would be more nearly suffering shipwreck, than that of others, who would desert, but not abjure, him, he exhorted him, after his recovery from so signal a lapse, to strengthen, by a more fervent zeal, those who might be tempted to forfeit theirs.

Such an unfavourable surmise roused the self-confident spirit of this presumptuous apostle; and, as if he could depend upon a heart, not yet conscious of wavering in his master's cause, he protested, in the sincerity of it, as he then imagined, that so far from being persuaded ever to abjure him, he was ready, if that should be found necessary, to die with him: but Jesus repeated, with a stronger emphasis, and in a more precise limitation of time, what he had cautioned him against before, that before the second crowing of the cock that very night, he should thrice deny that he had ever known him.

We cannot but observe, by the bye, how ill-grounded is the plea drawn by the Romanists for *Peter's* primacy from this peculiar

liar application of our Saviour to him, *Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you* ——— *but I have prayed for thee, &c.* It might as well have been made to any other of the Apostles, who were open to the like assault; and to whomsoever it had been directed, he must have felt rather a severe reprimand, than understood it as a promotion to the primacy (*d*).

Nothing now remained to finish the ceremonial of the passover, but to sing the hymn called *Hallel*, that was appointed for the conclusion of this solemn service, which consisted of six eucharistical psalms, from the 113th to the 118th inclusive; in which hymn, as the Jews observe, are mentioned the sorrows of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead (*e*). And then, after giving some affectionate farewell exhortations to his Apostles, and offering up a most devout supplication in behalf of himself, his Apostles, and all succeeding Christians, to the throne of grace, he left the guest-chamber, where he had celebrated

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(*d*) See *Lightfoot* on *Luke* xxii. ver. 31.

(*e*) See *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* in loc.

brated the paschal solemnity and the Lord's supper; and, as his custom was every night, went out of the city, with his Apostles, and crossing the brook *Kedron*, passed on towards the mount of *Olives*.

Upon their leaving the house, it is probable that *Judas* slipped away from them, and went privately to the high-priest's palace, where he had appointed the instruments of his wicked purpose to be ready, whenever he should call upon them, to put it into execution. It is possible, that the Apostles might take notice of *Judas's* withdrawing himself; and this gave Jesus occasion, in the way, of declaring to them with concern, that they would all of them be *offended because of him, that very night*, and even desert him in the midst of his distress; for so the prophet had foretold, *Zach. xiii. 7.*

*Peter* was hurt at such a declaration, and with his usual assurance of an immovable steadfastness (though most deeply involved in the future revolt) professed, that though all men, and all his brethren among the rest, should fall from him, and forsake him, yet nothing should tempt him to leave him, even to the last  
extremity.



extremity. This self-confidence had been twice corrected before in a manner that might in reason have alarmed him: but as the warning had not hitherto been sufficient to put him upon suspecting the treachery of his heart, Jesus repeated it a third time, with a degree of preciseness, that might have awakened him to a conviction of Christ's fore-knowledge and his own frailty, *Verily I say unto thee, doubt it not, that even in this night, which is now begun, before the cock crow twice, which may serve as a signal of its truth, thou shalt most cowardly deny me thrice.* Peter however still persisted in resolutely disclaiming such a suspicion, and all the disciples joined with him in the solemn asseveration of inviolable attachment to their master and his service, even unto death, insomuch that Jesus said no more, but left it to the event to justify his suspicion.

Having passed over the brook *Kedron*, which ran through a vale of the same name, they came to a place called *Gethsemane*, or the place of oil-presses, at the foot of mount *Olivet*, where was a garden, into which Jesus entered with his disciples: and indeed thither he had often before resorted with his disciples, for the sake of retirement and private devotion; so that

*Tudas*

*Judas* knew where he should find him; and *Jesus* knew, as well as he, that it would be a most convenient place for being apprehended, without alarming the people, or giving them an opportunity of raising a tumult, in order to rescue him.

Here began the preface to that dismal agony which was to terminate in the sufferings of an ignominious death. *Jesus* ordered eight of his disciples to stay at the entrance into the garden, while he took three of them, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, who had been the chosen witnesses of his transfiguration, into a more retired part, where they might now become spectators of his humiliation at the affecting prospect just before him, a deplorable scene of sorrow and grief; for he confessed to them, what his dejection of spirit plainly discovered, that his *soul was exceedingly sorrowful*, even as if he already felt the pangs of approaching death, or were now struggling under the severe conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and sinking under the infirmities of the human nature, if not supported by the supplies of divine aid. But partly to teach them how to apply for this divine succour, in the best manner, and partly to convince them that it would

not fail him, as a man, in the extremity of his distress, he desired them to continue where they were, and watch with him, while he went a little farther, for the sake of being still more composed in offering up his private ejaculations to heaven.

Accordingly, having withdrawn from them about the distance of a stone's cast, he first kneeled down, and, as if this posture of profound humility were not quite sufficient to express the ardour of his devotion, immediately after prostrated himself on the ground, and then prayed, that, *if it were possible*, or consistent with the will or wisdom of his father, the dreadful hour might *pass from him*, that he might avoid the bitter potion, the effect of that displeasure, which was due to a sinful world. But as if he would correct those first emotions of a dejected mind, he adds, with the true spirit of unfeigned submission and resignation to the divine decrees which he knew to be fixed, *Nevertheless, O my father, with whom all things are possible, not my will, but thine be done.*

After this short ejaculating prayer, which was seemingly uttered with all the disponding apprehensions

apprehensions of a dejected spirit, oppressed with the prospect of increasing grief, he returned to the three disciples: but they were so much overwhelmed with sorrow at what was coming, and at what they apprehended would come, that they were fallen asleep. Jesus reproved them, but gently: *Why sleep ye?* and then turning to Peter, who had been most forward in his protestations of zeal and fidelity, he admonished him in particular, what, Simon, dost *thou* sleep also? *couldst not thou*, who didst but just now boast of spending an unwearied life in my service, *couldst thou not watch with me* so long as *one hour*? Let me again exhort you all to *watch and pray*, that ye may not *fall into temptation*. My rebuke is the less severe, because I can find some apology for your failure: I know that *the spirit is willing*; but *the flesh is weak*; your minds are well affected, but the infirmities of nature betray you.

When he had thus kindly admonished them, he left them a second time, and prayed, at a little distance, nearly in the same words, which he had used before. Then returning to them again, he found them so much overcome with sleep, that they could not recover themselves  
enough



enough to know what they should answer him. Without saying any thing, however, but just what might rouse them for the present from their slumber, he went away the third time, and prayed as he had done before, but with so great earnestness, heightened by the violence of his agony, that, according to the interpretation of some, the blood issued from his pores, together with his sweat, and dropped upon the earth (*f*), or rather, the sweat ran off from him like drops of blood, which trickled down to the ground; insomuch that an angel was dispatched from Heaven to strengthen and support the human nature under this struggle. Thus recovering himself from the dreadful conflict, he returned a third time to the disciples, and finding them, notwithstanding his repeated admonitions, still sleeping, he told them now, with a mixture of reproof and irony, that they *might sleep on still, if they could, and take their rest*; or, as some, with the vulgar and the glossaries, have interpreted it by an interrogation, Do ye now sleep and take your rest, when the hour is come, and your master is to be immediately

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(*f*) Whitby on Luke xxii. ver. 24.

delivered into the hands of them who seek his life? (g) He therefore called upon them to *arise and go*, for that the traitor was then just at hand.

Jesus had scarcely spoken these words, when lo, Judas appeared at the head of a large company of soldiers and officers, and others whom he had procured from the Chief-priests for this purpose, armed with swords and staves, and furnished with lanterns and torches, though it was then full-moon, lest, as they foolishly imagined, they should miss him in any of the more secret recesses in the garden.

Judas had fixed upon the signal, by which he would point him out from the rest, who might possibly be found there with him, and that was, that he would kiss the person whom they were to take into their custody. Going therefore a little before the others, he came up to Jesus, and with an air of respect, as if he rejoiced to meet him again, after a short absence, cried, *Hail, Master*, and kissed him.

Jesus

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(g) See Essay for a new Translation, p. 131, *Whitby* in loc. and *Benson's Hist. of the Life of Christ*, p. 493.

Jesus understood the nature of this greeting, however perfidiously disguised under the mask of love and friendship; but yet he only answered him with this mild rebuke, *Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the son of man,* for you know me well by that title, *with a kiss?*

Not dismayed however at the formidable appearance of an armed rabble, nor attempting to oppose or escape from them, Jesus stepped forward, and with the greatest composure of mind asked them, *whom they were seeking?* Struck at the majestic and intrepid air with which he asked this question, instead of apprehending him, they only answered, that they were come to apprehend Him who was called *Jesus of Nazareth*. Upon his telling them, that He was the person, they were so strangely confounded by his bare words, that, as if they were afraid to seize him, though unarmed and unguarded, they ran backward, and fell to the ground, through horror. Recovering themselves however from this consternation, they went up to him again with renewed courage, when he asked them again, with the same firmness of spirit, *Whom seek ye?* To which they made only the same reply

as before. Jesus answered, *I have already told you, that I am he*; adding, if I am the only person whom you want to find, *let these, who are my friends and companions, go their way without molestation.*—Dr. Lightfoot supposes, “That Christ had struck those to the ground” “that came to apprehend him, by the power” “of his word, that he might thereby provide” “for the flight of his disciples, and shew his” “divine power.” (b) The latter, no doubt, was designed, and they felt it; but the former is more than we can collect from the context: for he had before told his disciples of their forsaking him, as their fault; and therefore it is not likely, that he should now contrive the means of an escape from them, which would have taken away their fault.

As he was speaking, the soldiers laid hands on him, their willing prisoner, without the least resistance: but when the disciples saw that their master was thus seized by violence, they mustered up their courage, and asked him, whether they should not smite those execrable wretches with the sword? And without  
waiting

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(b) Lightfoot's Heb. and Talm. Exerc. on *John xviii.* ver. 10.



waiting for an answer, *Peter*, to shew how resolute and undaunted at the appearance he was, hastily drew his sword, and in great fury struck at *Malchus*, a servant of the High-priest, who perhaps appeared more busy than the rest, and cut off his right ear. But Jesus rebuked him for this intemperate zeal, and ordered him to put up his sword into its sheath, as an useless instrument of defence to Him, who could have commanded legions of angels to defend him, if that had been his aim or desire. But while the captain of the band and the officers were binding him, to prevent his escape, he asked leave only that he might be allowed so much the liberty of using his hands, as to touch the man's ear, and with the touch he healed him: Enough, one would have thought, to turn the heart of the most hardened infidel, at the sight.

Then he began to expostulate with the mixed multitude, who were guarding him, for the indignity of such a rude assault, as if he meant to bring them to some sense of remorse for what they were doing. Why are you come out against me with these formidable weapons, as you would seize a common thief or robber, making some desperate effort to es-

cape from his pursuers? You have had opportunities enough to apprehend me, while I was teaching in the temple, day after day; but then, you did not offer the least degree of violence against me. I know, however, the reason of all this, better than you yourselves do: you were hitherto restrained by a secret check: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness is now suffered to vent his malice upon me; for the ancient prophecies must be fulfilled. But nothing he could say availed. They bound him and led him away to judgment.

When the disciples saw their master bound, and now at length, perceived, that if they still persisted in their adherence to him and his cause, they must indeed follow him either to prison or to death, their courage failed, and, as it were with one consent, notwithstanding their late protestations to the contrary, *they forsook him and fled.*——In the midst of the bustle that arose, a young man appeared with only a linen cloth thrown about his naked body, who, as some have conjectured, was *James* the Lord's brother, and as others, *John* the beloved disciple; but who was, most probably, some one lodging in the village  
near

near to the garden, and being awakened out of his sleep by the noise, arose in a hurry, and followed the company, perhaps with some shew of anxious zeal for the event. Some of the soldiers suspecting him to be a disciple, laid hold on him, and in his fright, he left the linen garment, and *fled from them naked.*

Jesus being thus in the custody of the hireling multitude, who were employed to apprehend him, was carried first to the house of *Annas*, who was father-in-law to *Caiaphas*, the high-priest. But he judged it more proper to send him, bound as he was, to the High-priest's palace, because the whole body of the Sanhedrim were assembled there, waiting for him, though it was now late at night.

Here Jesus was placed before the tribunal, as a malefactor, in order to undergo a minute scrutiny into his doctrine and the conduct of his followers, for the purpose of a discovery, if possible, that the one was suspicious, and the other heretical. But Jesus referred the High-priest, who examined him, to what he had taught openly in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted; and to their testimony, which he meant not to bias, he fairly appealed for a

proof of his innocent and inoffensive behaviour.

This meek reply, one would have thought, could not have given offence to any man, however prejudiced : but yet one of the officers, more officious than ordinary (in the opinion of the ancients, the very *Malchus*, whose ear Jesus had just before healed) struck him for it on the face, under a pretence, that he had offered an indignity to the High-priest, by thus referring him to others for an answer to his questions, and not directly answering them himself. Jesus however bore even this injurious treatment with his usual temper, and only answered him mildly, that if he had then, or at any other time, spoken any thing amiss, he might testify against him ; but if not, why did he strike him ?

The Chief-priests and Elders of the council perceiving that they could extort nothing from his own mouth, by which they might form a sufficient accusation against him, searched out for some false witnesses, who might alledge something criminal against him, that would subject him to a formal tryal, which, if well managed, might end in his condemnation ;  
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for they could never enter upon a process that would legally affect his life, on such answers as he had hitherto made.

But though they had procured many such false witnesses, yet they could find none that fully answered their purpose ; for the law required the concurrent testimony of two witnesses, before a capital sentence could be passed upon a delinquent ; but no two of them could agree in their allegation. At length there came two, who could with truth depose, they heard him say formerly, though they little understood what he meant, or else wilfully perverted it, that he would destroy the temple of God, and build it up again in three days. But, in the wording of their evidence, they disagreed likewise ; for one of them testified, that he said, *I am able to destroy* it, and the other, more positively, *I will destroy* it ; a difference, which alone was enough to defeat their testimony, and if not, their testimony did not amount to a capital charge.

Nevertheless, as this was the most plausible of any yet appearing, they determined to proceed upon it, however frivolous, as it was possible that it might lead

them to some further discovery. Accordingly, the high-priest rose up in the midst of the assembly, and asked him what reply he could make to these witnesses? But finding that he would make none (not from fullness, but prudence) either to them or to him, he put another question to Jesus, which could not but extort some reply from him, since he would put him upon his oath to answer him in direct terms. To prevent evasions, therefore, as he thought Jesus meant to use some, he solemnly adjured him by the living God, as he had authority, by virtue of his office, to exact such an oath of him, to declare, whether he was the Messiah, the son of God, or not: for even in the sense of the Jews, *to be the Christ*, and *to be the son of God*, were synonymous terms. If he answered this question in the negative, it would, according to their preconceived notions, convict him of imposture, if in the affirmative, of blasphemy. Jesus, *in regard of the oath of God*, answered in express terms, *I am*, nor will I ever recede from that claim; and though you may now pass the sentence of death upon me, under colour of law, for asserting such a claim, yet you shall hereafter see me, who am, as the son of man, thus despitely

spitefully arraigned at the bar of justice, sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven, to condemn Those who are about to condemn Me. (i)

This open confession of his divinity at once surprized and confounded his judges : but the high-priest, to express his abhorrence of such a profession, which he construed to be downright blasphemy, *rent his cloaths*, (k) (for

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(i) Dr. *Whitby* rather refers this to his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the final day of judgment, because it is said, *αἰαρεῖ*, in Matthew: *Within a little while*, and by St. Luke, *καὶ τότε ἔτι*, *from this time* shall ye see the son of man coming, &c. Note on Matt. xxvi. v. 64. But our Saviour's own expression elsewhere, and the common acceptation of the phrase, together with the scripture description of that solemnity, refer it rather to the final consummation of all things. Not but that he meant to include both the one in a primary, and the other in a secondary sense.

(k) Their custom and reason of rending their cloaths upon hearing blasphemy, is handled in *Jerus. in Sanhedr.* fol. 25. col. 1 and 2. and in *Maim. in Avrdab Zarab.* per. 1. where those two Canons being observed, "Every one that hears God's name blasphemed, is bound to rent his garments;" and "the Judges hearing blasphemy must stand upon their feet, and must rent their cloaths, and may not sew them again," will cause

in the sense of the Jews, to own himself *the son of God*, and to *make himself equal with God*, was the same thing) and demanding the opinion of the council, which he supposed would concur with his own, pronounced him a blasphemer. They all readily joined with him in declaring him guilty of death, by the tenor of their law, without requiring any further witness: he was therefore condemned to die.

With this resolution the council broke up, and the innocent prisoner was left, during the remainder of the night, to the merciless treatment of the rude rabble, who did not fail, as he was now under the sentence of condemnation, to abuse him with all the most barbarous scoffs and insults that they could invent: they spit on him, they buffeted him, they blindfolded him, they smote him on the head, and then, in derision of the prophetic character  
which

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cause us to observe something in the circumstance, that the High-priest only rent his cloaths, and not the rest of the bench with him, who yet vote with him, that it was blasphemy, and that therefore he was guilty of death, which, had it been executed, must have been by stoning. *Sanhedr. per. 7. Nalac. 4.*—*Lightfoot's Harm.* p. 263.



which he pretended to assume, they demanded of him to prophesy, if he could, who it was that struck him, adding all the indignities, affronts, and blasphemies, that their insolent imaginations could suggest, too great for any less than divine patience to bear.

While this melancholy business was in agitation, Peter and John, who had taken their flight with the rest of the disciples, when they saw the danger of attending their master, recovering themselves a little from their fright, and having some curiosity, as was natural, to hear the probable result of the whole, ventured to follow Jesus at a distance. John, who was known to the high-priest, gained admittance into the palace, but Peter stood for a while at the door, till, by the interest of his fellow-disciple John with the door-keeper, he too was let into the palace of the high-priest, where his Lord was under examination.—In the middle of the common-hall there was a fire kindled, for it was cold, and as the servants and officers were sitting round it, warming themselves, Peter mixed with them, hoping to pass unnoticed in the croud. But while he was there, waiting to hear the result of the trial, the maid-servant,

servant, who had let him in, fixed her eyes upon him, and recognizing his countenance, said to some who stood near her, that she could not but think that this man had been with Jesus of Nazareth, and, upon the strength of this suspicion, asked him directly whether he was not one of his disciples?

The question, thus abruptly put, staggered his resolution at once; and dreading the fatal consequences arising from such a discovery, he flatly denied that he ever knew him, or that he was one of his disciples. Nay, he averred, with some seeming indignation, that he did not understand what she meant by laying such a thing to his charge; as if he scorned to be guilty of forming such a connection. Then turning away, as greatly offended at such a surmise, he went out into the porch. But no sooner had he got there than the cock crew. This circumstance might have alarmed him at any other time; but the present perturbation of his mind so drowned the sense of it that it passed by him unheeded. — While he was in the porch another maid accosted him in the same strain, and bringing him into the company that stood by  
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the fire, challenged him for one of his disciples. But he confidently denied it the second time, that he had the least knowledge of the man; and *for a confirmation* of his veracity, *added an oath*. About an hour after, when he imagined that he had got rid of all further inquiries, another began to charge him with the same connection; and others, who stood by, joined in the suspicion, upon grounds which fully evinced it; for it was plain that he was a *Galilean*, as most of Jesus's followers were, and his dialect discovered as much. Nay, the evidence against him was still stronger, for a relation of that *Malchus*, whose ear Peter had cut off, pressed it home upon him, by asking him before them all, *Did not I see thee with him in the garden?* with what face then can you deny it? This last accusation terrified him beyond measure; but he had no other way of shifting it off, than with oaths and imprecations to deny it again. As soon as he had done this, the cock crew the second time. This seems not yet to have awakened him to a sense of his fault; but it happened just at this moment, that Jesus (the examination being finished) was led down into the common hall, and hearing Peter utter these last words, he turned about, and  
*looked*

*looked upon him.* This glance struck him to the heart. He then recollected the warning which Jesus had given him. He trembled at the signal, which he had disregarded before ; and overcome as he was with grief and confusion, he went out and wept bitterly.

Mr. Pilkington, in order to reconcile the accounts, which the several Evangelists have given of St. Peter's denial with the circumstances of our Lord's predictions about it, has stated the series of the history in such a manner, as to interpret each of them in a strictly literal sense, which the foregoing account may not admit. On the Thursday morning, as St. John relates it, he tells Peter, *The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.* On the same day, he repeated the same prophetic charge in another manner, *The cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me,* by St. Luke's account : and just before they went into the garden, St. Matthew tells us, that Jesus said unto him, *This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice :* and St. Mark, *This day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.* By the expression in St. Matthew and St. John, *Before the*  
cock



*cock crow*, some expositors understand, before the cock crowing should be past; because it is said, that he once denied him to the maid-servant, before he went into the porch, and heard the cock the first time; and others, in the time of cock-crowing; (1) that is, between the hours of twelve and three. But this harmonist would rather understand by it, that it should not crow at all, before he had thrice denied him, and has accordingly placed it thus in his Harmony. The first denial to the damsel who kept the door; the second to the servants who were warming themselves at the fire; and the third to *Malchus's* kinsman: and all this before he went into the porch at all: immediately upon which the cock crew.

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(1) Thus *Lightfoot*, the ἀλέκτωρ ὁ φωνιστής, ought not to be rendered, the cock shall not crow once, or at all, but it amounts to this sense, within the time of cock-crowing thou shalt deny me thrice; for Peter had denied him but once before the first crowing of the cock, and thrice before the second. *Mark* xiv. 68, 72. So that our Saviour's words are thus to be paraphrased, Are you so secure of yourself, O Peter? Verily I say unto you, the time shall be, and that shortly, when you shall deny me thrice within the time of cock-crowing. *Heb. and Talmud. Exerc. on Matt. xxvi. 34.*

But this does not appear to be exactly the true state of the case; for by comparing the Evangelists it will be evident, that his first denial was to the maid who kept the door. He turned from her, and went out into the porch, and then the cock crew the first time. He was there challenged by another maid, who carried him back into the hall, where others, who stood by, taxed him with the same; whereupon he denied it the second time with an oath. About an hour after, others charged him still closer, from his dialect, with being Christ's disciple; and above all, the kinsman of *Malchus*, who saw him in the garden with Jesus, and perhaps was present when he cut off his relation's ear; all which, with some horrid imprecations he denied the third time, and immediately the cock crew the second time.

The expression therefore in St. John, which has raised this difficulty to the commentators, *The cock shall not crow, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me*, must be interpreted in the larger sense, for the common time of cock-crowing, which, says *Doddridge*, probably did not come till after the cock, which Peter heard, had crowed the second time.

time, and perhaps oftener. (m)—Do we not see something of miracle in this cock crowing just at this moment, at whatever hour of the night it might be? St. Matthew and Mark are more particular, and St. John after them more general in his expression.

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(m) See Doddridge on Luke xxii. 34. The *Γευροπαις*, or Gallinicism, emphatically so called, was not till the morning. V. *Paul's Synop. in loc.* V. *Pilkington's Notes*, p. 54, 55.

## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

**H**OW punctual was our great Redeemer in *fulfilling all righteousness*! How backward are we in fulfilling the least! He would not neglect his attendance at the passover, tho' he knew it was at the peril of his life; we can neglect his sacred ordinance, which is our Gospel-passover, upon every trifling occasion; nay, we will make it give way to any thing else, and omit nothing that concerns us so often. We raise difficulties to ourselves that will prevail over duty, though not over inclination, and then persuade ourselves, that it is more dangerous to enter into the doors of the church than into any other place of common resort: and if inclination alone would justify in the sight of God, though his command be urgent to the contrary, all his commands would become unnecessary.

We



We do not mean to set positive institutions upon the same footing with moral duties; for these are unchangeably good in their nature and essence, whereas those are good so far only as they are commanded. Nevertheless, when they are enjoined by divine authority, they are indispensable, and the neglect of them is therefore criminal. As long as the Jewish tabernacle and city were standing, the command of celebrating the Jewish passover there, was in its full force; but as soon as they were destroyed, it could not, with any propriety, be continued; for its celebration was, by express order, confined to that place. It was confined in its nature too; for the blessing it commemorated related only to the Jews, and the rest of the world could have no concern in it.

But when a redemption was wrought, the benefits of which were to extend to all mankind, it required another kind of institution to keep up the remembrance of it, which might be celebrated in every place, and at all times. For as the redemption was universal it was meet that the acknowledgement of it should be universal likewise. The sacramental rite, which our Saviour at this time substituted

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stituted in the room of the Jewish-passover, was in every respect suited to this religious purpose. When he commanded his disciples, and through them all future generations, to *do this in remembrance of him*, he commanded That, in which all mankind had an inestimable interest, and from which they would have a sure reward.

The bread which he broke was aptly significant of his body, which was about to be pierced upon the cross, for the salvation of the world. The wine which he poured out was properly emblematical of his blood, which was about to be shed for the remission of sins. Every repetition of this solemn act would be truly sacramental; for it has in its administration every property which is included in the meaning, the efficacy, or the end of a sacrament. This is well defined to be “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as the means whereby we receive the same, and as a pledge to assure us thereof.” In such a definition is comprised not only the matter, which are the elements with which it is administered, constituting the outward form, but the secret gift, which

which is the grace of God, conveyed by it, and for which, not for the mere substance we see, it is, that we rank it among our most important and solemn services. Not that we lay so great stress upon it, because it is the resemblance or memorial of something absent, or yet further, because it is the testimony of divine grace already received; but chiefly, because it is the appointed means, and therefore the effectual means, of deriving that grace from God which the sacrament itself represents and signifies, and which alone is available to eternal life.

The form of expression, which, being misunderstood, has misled some into dangerous conceptions of the institution itself, is so much the true sacramental language, that it might rather have directed them to the contrary conclusions. For observe the account which the Evangelists have given us of this whole transaction, and it will amount to this. *This is my body, which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me.*—This is my body— whoever can consult the original will find, that the word *this*, which is there in the neuter-gender, cannot refer to the bread, which would require the masculine, as if he had said,

# THE REFLECTIONS.

said, this bread is my body; but it refers, in true concord, to the action, *take, eat*; as if he had said this taking and this eating is my body, it signifies, or it represents my body, inasmuch as it conveys to you, through faith, the saving benefits of my death and sufferings, which such a thankful remembrance will deserve and secure. This is a language to which you are no strangers, for your own law will help you to understand its propriety, since this is in the very same sense to be called *my body*, in which Moses taught you to call the future celebration of the passover, at every annual return of it, *the Lord's Passover*.

He adds, *this is my body which is given for you*—not my true, natural body, which is present with you; not that glorified body with which I shall hereafter appear, as the son of man, in the clouds, and on the seat of judgement; but the representation of that body which is shortly to be crucified and wounded for you. Otherwise, the same body would be taken, broken, and eaten by him, whilst yet it remained whole and entire; or the same body would be in heaven and on earth, invisible and visible, at the same time; absurdities, which none, but such as have  
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an implicit faith in an infallible church, could pretend to reconcile.

Finally he adds, *Do this in remembrance of me*—which includes a threefold obligation upon us, in point of *duty*, in point of *interest*, and in point of *gratitude*. For it was the command of a dying Saviour, when he was dying for our sakes. If a common friend should, in his last moments, leave a request to be fulfilled after his death, however insignificant it might be in itself, it will ordinarily prevail with his surviving friends to comply punctually with the conditions of it; and should they scruple or neglect, in any particular to fulfil it, such an omission would be deservedly branded with infamy and disgrace. How then can we hope to escape the like reproach from ourselves or others, when we presume openly to slight, or intentionally to contemn, the earnest request of our greatest and best friend, the dying Saviour and Redeemer of our souls?

Especially when we reflect, that not more our duty than our interest is concerned, in the neglect or observance of such a command. For it is, in truth, full of all the advan-

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tages, the blessings, and the comforts, that Heaven can bestow, or mankind receive; which yet are no otherwise promised, ratified, or confirmed to them, than by this memorial of his death and sufferings. Is there a more interesting purpose to be devised than the pardon of sins, and the salvation of the soul; a reconciliation with an offended God, and everlasting comfort? But these are the great ends which this sacred ordinance is calculated to promote, and all of them are forfeited by the neglect of it. For such is the import of the command; do this, and receive the benefits of my death and passion; do this, and be eternally happy; including partly the means, and partly the condition of it.

Mistake me not: I do not mean to exclude all those from the hope of salvation, who have not at any time partook of, or who have most frequently absented themselves from, this holy sacrament. But this I must say, that such men deprive themselves of the most effectual means of grace; and this at least must weaken the foundation of their hopes of glory.—Had we but the due sense we profess to have of the threatenings denounced against disobedience, or had we a just esteem of the

invaluable blessings promised to the faithful communicant, we should account it the greatest infelicity and misfortune in the world, ever to be debarred of this privilege, of which yet numbers of heedless christians deliberately deprive themselves without regret.

These precious promises, annexed to this duty, will call forth our gratitude, and gratitude will immediately influence us to comply with the command of our friend. The present command is attended with the most gracious and affectionate kindness on his part. For thus, in effect, it runs. I, who being *in the form of God*, have nevertheless condescended to take upon me *the form of a servant* for your salvation, command you to *do this in remembrance of me*. I, who came to bear *the griefs, and carry the sorrows* of a whole world of sinners, command you to *do this in remembrance of me*. I, who am just ready to be wounded for the transgressions, and bruised for the iniquities of my relentless and cruel murderers, command you to *do this in remembrance of me*; to retain only the memory of these gracious instances of love and compassion, by a service, not grievous or burdensome in it-

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self,

self, but infinitely beneficial to your immortal souls ; do this, and be eternally happy.

How ungrateful are we then, how insensible of his blessings, if, after having received from Christ more than we can express, we even refuse to acknowledge that we have received them ! Does not the great love of God in giving his son, does not the love of our Saviour in giving himself for us, deserve so much as a remembrance ? None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ ; none but Christ was able to bear them ; and are there no thanks due to him for substituting himself as a sacrifice to appease God's displeasure in the room of sinners ? Should we not be ashamed of forgetting a common benefactor ? and do we thus *requite the Lord who bought us*, and bought us at so dear a rate as the sacrifice of his own life ?

Jesus, as soon as this religious institution, ordained for the perpetual service of his church in all future ages, was ended, retired into the garden, for the purpose of private meditation and prayer ; herein *setting us an example that we should follow his steps.*—The devotions of the closet constitute as eminent



ment a branch of the Christian duty, as the offices of the Temple. These indeed are more exemplary in the sight of others, but those are not less amiable in the sight of God. In the publick service of the Church, though not to be omitted, the pious christian cannot make a special recital of the many sins he has committed, the many duties he has neglected, or the many mercies he has received, for he has neither time nor opportunity, whilst he is engaged in the same common formulary with his brethren of the same congregation, to dwell upon these particulars ; but in his private addresses to the throne of grace, he will be more at leisure, and better qualified to open all his cares, and to represent all his wants. He may confess his bosom-sins, and implore the forgiveness of them : he may lament the distresses of his soul, and beg compassion under them : he may recount his blessings, and offer the full tribute of thanksgiving for them : he may pray for himself, and for those who stand related to him. The soul indeed will disburthen itself before God without reserve ; and he *who seeth* these uninterrupted exercises of an heavenly conversation *in secret*, will one day *reward them openly*.

Among the various subjects of meditation in this our religious retirement, we shall not fail to pray unto God, that he will not *lead us into temptation*; that is, not suffer any, that shall fall in our way, so far to prevail over us, as to betray us either into a denial of our religious principles, or a desertion of them. Left to themselves, the most secure are in danger. None could be better taught, or more faithfully warned against an approaching lapse, than St. Peter, and yet he fell. Can any of us presume to say, that if we were in his situation we should acquit ourselves better! Let us rather *bear and fear*.

It may perhaps surprize us to hear, that the resolution of an apostle was shaken by the slight accusation of an insignificant maid-servant, who only kept the door of the house. But do we not see many yielding to solicitations to evil from as mean an influence, and without the same motive of self-preservation, nay, against it; even from such companions as they would despise upon any other occasion, and from that quarter, which good advice would be received with ridicule, they will yet listen to bad insinuations?

But

But St. Peter, you will say, was repeatedly forewarned of his danger, and resolutely promised to withstand it; neither was his a single denial, for that might have arisen from a sudden surprize; but it was deliberate; it was trebled; for not the first crowing of the cock could give the alarm, or prevent the imprecations with which the horrid falsehood was backed. True; and are not we forewarned *by precept upon precept* not to *stand in the way of sinners*; but is this found sufficient to guard our wavering hearts against it? Do we not solemnly *promise and vow*, in the presence of God and his church, *to renounce the devil and all his works*? but does this promise bind us, whenever the forbidden fruit is held out, with his recommendation of its agreeable qualities? Do we not *take and eat* it as greedily as if God had commanded, instead of forbidden, compliance? We renew that promise, as often as we partake, with our Redeemer, of the holy banquet at his table; but does this restrain us? Do not our good resolutions vanish, almost as soon as they are made? And is it not too commonly our case, that we sin and repent by turns?

We hear the crowing of the cock; we are alarmed with the symptoms of mortality; but how do we listen to the voice? The present impressions are deep and awakening; but within a short time where are the traces of them to be found? Do we become more pious, more devout, or more serious than we were before? Alas! our negligence returns with the re-establishment of our health, and every good impression that sickness had made is quickly effaced or worn out.

Thus St. Peter in his fall is unto us a sign: may his recovery be our example! His sin is our warning: may his repentance be our pattern! One glance from his master's eye pierced his soul; it wounded his heart with a deep remorse for his grievous sin, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow. It was a glance of pity for his frailty and of rebuke for his unthankfulness; it was an unbraiding look, as well as a compassionate one; and whilst it signified to him the weakness of his heart, if he were left to himself, it directed him *to look up unto God, from whence cometh help.* Conscience is that faithful monitor which never fails to strike the heart with confusion at the remembrance of sin, and will continue to re-  
peat



peat its admonitions till it brings forth sorrow for it. When this begins, the grace of God has found an entrance into the soul; and such is the compassion of heaven, that, till it has brought the sincere penitent to his *right mind*, it will not leave him.

“ *The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*  
“ So may he graciously look upon us, if we  
“ at any time make any approaches towards  
“ the like sin! May he look upon us with  
“ a glance, which shall penetrate our hearts,  
“ and cause floods of penitential sorrow to  
“ flow forth! *Peter went out and wept bitterly.*  
“ —He quitted that dangerous scene, where  
“ temptation had met and vanquished him;  
“ and chose retirement and solitude to give  
“ vent to his overflowing soul. Thus may we  
“ recover ourselves, or rather thus may we  
“ be recovered by divine grace, from those  
“ slips and falls, which in this frail state we  
“ shall often be making. Let us retire  
“ from the business and snares of life, that  
“ we may attend to the voice of conscience,  
“ and of God speaking by it; and may so  
“ taste the *wormwood and the gall*, that our  
“ souls may long have them in remem-  
H 5 “ brance.”

“ brance.”—Doddridge’s Fam. Exp. vol. II.  
p. 536.

*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* What ! could not the disciples watch with Christ *one hour* ? Lord ! what is man, or what are the best of men, when left to themselves ! how frail, how supine, how negligent in duty ! A whole life spent in the service of our Redeemer is no more than his loving-kindness might well require of us ; and yet, when he asks only for a few hours to be devoted to him, and this too for our own sakes, we grow remiss ; think the command too irksome, and refuse to comply with it but when we please ourselves. Christ knows our frame, and will make favourable allowances for its weakness ; but when, through indolence, we suffer the remainders of corruption in our nature to get the better of the succours of divine grace in the heart, his forbearance can be no longer displayed.—*Sleep on now, and take your rest,* is the sentence of dereliction, when we will not strive to overcome the temptation that easily besets us. For the curse of spiritual slumber is the just punishment of the sin : *according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber,*

*slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.——Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. Rom. II, 8, 10.*

But such a severity of displeasure did not await all the disciples. None but Judas meant to betray their master; for the time came shortly, when each of the others *resisted unto blood* in defence of his testimony. But the traitor, with the semblance of affection, still persisted in the *gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. St. Peter fell by surprise; Judas's treachery was deliberate. St. Peter's fault had nothing of malice or contrivance: that of Judas, all the characters of an inflexible resolution, and stubborn villainy: and therefore the repentance of St. Peter was the effect of *godly sorrow*, but the remorse of Judas was the effect of rage and confusion, the agonies of frenzy, and the amazement of despair. One would think, indeed, that when he saw the face of his compassionate master, who had breathed out nothing but kindness towards him, his wicked heart would have relented, as well as Peter's, either awed by the majesty, or influenced by the benevolence it expressed; but it was then, and ever

will be true, that hypocrisy in religion, harbours, under the mask of friendship, the bitterest enmity against it.

We likewise betray the son of man with a kiss, when under the pretence of doing him honour, we undermine the interests of his kingdom; and that is, when we call him, Lord, Lord, but do not the things which he has commanded. Instead of such injurious treatment, which profanes the sacred name by which we are called, to serve a wicked purpose, “may we be now so wise as to *kiss* “*the son* in token of our humble allegiance “to him, lest he be,” in the day of his glorious appearance, “justly angry with us; yea, “lest we immediately perish from the way, “when *his wrath* is but beginning to be “*kindled*.”—Doddridge, vol. 2, p. 544.

His false accusers may *lay many things to his charge*, before he is provoked to *open his mouth*; but he will at last *arise, and maintain his own cause*. They may misrepresent his words, or ridicule his doctrines; they may arraign his pretensions, or mock at his appearance; but the time is shortly coming when his enemies shall be summoned to the  
bar



bar, whilst he is sitting on the bench; when obstinate infidelity shall be turned into sensible conviction; and that, not in order to conversion, it will then be too late for this effect; but in order to an eternal recompence, which will end in overwhelming confusion.—Let this unjust proceeding against the innocent Lord of life teach us, in the mean time, how we ought to behave under the lashes of the malignant tongue of envy and malice. And if at any time, we suffer this reproach, have all manner of evil, not only spoken, but even sworn against us falsely, let us remember, that our Redeemer was once in the same circumstances, and that we his servants cannot expect to escape better than our Lord and Master did before us.

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## GOOD-FRIDAY.

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### S E C T. I.

#### THE NARRATIVE.

Matt. xxvii. Mark xv. Luke xxiii. John xviii.

**T**HE villainous proceedings of the last most horrid night had not allowed our blessed Saviour any rest, for he had not *where to lay his head*. Early in the morning, the great Council of the Jews, called the Sanhedrim, met again in a full body, that they might the better fix upon the method, in which they should proceed to execute, in the most ignominious, the sentence already passed upon him, in the most illegal, manner. That they might, however, preserve the appearance of a legal process, though previously determined to break through the bounds of it, they ordered him again to be brought before them, as if they meant to try whether

whether he would still maintain or relinquish his former pretensions of being the son of God, and to condemn or acquit him accordingly.

They had, by their own authority, announced him a blasphemer, for these pretensions: but, as if that were not enough, they wanted to procure a still severer sentence of death than such an accusation would expose him to; and therefore, that he might be made to suffer the most ignominious and painful death that could be inflicted, they were desirous of representing him as a seditious enemy to Cæsar's government; a charge, which would, if ending in condemnation, pave the way to the worst of punishments, such as the basest of malefactors usually underwent, *that* of crucifixion likewise. For this purpose they agreed to carry him before the Roman governor, as a state prisoner, who was guilty of the most unpardonable crime of high-treason.

While they were thus deliberating about the mode of condemnation, Judas made his appearance among them; for he had all along been waiting the issue of these tragical indignities; and now finding, that they had proceeded

ceeded further than he at first suspected, even to the cruelty of delivering his master into the hands of the pagan authority, he began to repent of having been the instrument in such an execrable fact, thus overstretched far beyond his design or imagination : and to express his repentance the more forcibly, as well as to give some relief to his tormenting conscience, he brought back the money, that he had received from them for embarking in this iniquitous conspiracy against the life of an innocent friend : for “ such is the purchase of treason, and the reward of covetousness ; it is cheap in its offers, momentary in its possession, unsatisfying in its fruition, uncertain in its stay, sudden in its departure, horrid in the remembrance, and a ruin, a certain and miserable ruin in the event.” (a)

Here was a deep repentance, as it should seem, a public confession, and a full restitution ; yet all too little for one, who had done *such despite to the spirit of grace*, and was now *fallen into the hands of the living God*, for having *sold himself to do evil*. The Priests, insensible

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(a) *Taylor's Life of Christ*, sect. 31.



fible to those infernal torments he felt within him, because their own fires burned not yet, dismissed him with a rough answer,—That he might look to what he had done himself, it was his own act and deed, and therefore no concern of theirs; but with the money he had thrown down they purchased a spot of ground, called the *Potter's field*, for the interment of the profelytes of the gate, unwittingly accomplishing by this the prediction of the prophet *Zachariah*. *Judas*, however, being delivered over to the power of Satan, went and hanged himself; and the judgment was made more signal by an accident, unusual at such deaths; for being prodigiously swelled, he fell headlong from the tree, (*Acts* i. 18.) burst in sunder, and his bowels fell out in so wonderful a manner, that it was noted by all that dwelt at *Jerusalem*. As the wickedness he had committed was beyond all precedent, so the punishment he suffered was beyond all example (*b*).

They had now bound their willing prisoner, whom, if he had meant to escape, not all their  
armed

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(*b*) *Eachard's Eccles. Hist.* vol. I. p. 198.

armed forces could have secured: and, lest the multitude, who still continued partial to him, should endeavour to rescue him in the way, they hurried him, as fast as they could, to the *Prætorium*, or Judgment-hall, which was a part of the palace of the Roman governor. The Jews, though now engaged in condemning innocent blood, were yet so scrupulous in lesser matters, that they would not enter into the hall of a Pagan at this time, lest they should be defiled, and thereby become unfit, according to the tenor of their law, to eat the passover, as St. John expresses it, that is, to join in the remaining solemnities of the *Chagigah* (or peace-offering) consisting of the sheep and oxen that were offered all the seven days of the feast (c), which was a material part of that festivity. *Pontius Pilate* therefore vouchsafed to come out to them to the gate of the palace, and understanding their business, asked them what accusation they had to bring against the prisoner? They were stung, as well as perplexed, at such a question, and therefore answered him rather abruptly, for they scarcely knew what crime to fix upon him,

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(c) See *Whitby* on *John* xviii. 20. and Appendix to *Mark*.

him, that if he had not been a malefactor who deserved to die, they would not have brought him before his tribunal. If he be such, said *Pilate*, then take ye him, and judge him according to your law; for he knew something of Jesus by report, and was probably convinced in his own mind, that he did not deserve death: but they, partly through fear of the people, and partly through a consciousness of the odium that would ensue, declined the final decision of so important a trial, by meanly alledging, that they had lost the legal power of *putting any man to death*, without the express consent of the Roman governor: and, in truth, they had: for it is generally understood, that they had been deprived of such an authority before this time, though they still retained the power of trying and condemning for crimes, which their own law had made capital (*d*). In this application  
however

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(*d*) It cannot be denied, but that all capital judgment, or sentence upon life, had been taken from the Jews for above 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, as they oftentimes themselves confess. But how came this to pass? It is commonly received, that the Romans, at this time the lords and masters of the Jews, had  
taken

however they did not mean so much to request a ratification of their own sentence, which had been passed upon him, as a blasphemer, as to procure a new sentence of crucifixion, which was the Roman punishment, for a seditious disturber of Cæsar's government.

To prove that he was so, they alledged against him, that he had refused to give tribute unto Cæsar, tho' he had once worked a miracle for the payment of it; and had, moreover, claimed the title of King, though he had avoided the opportunity of being made one. To these accusations Jesus would turn no answer; for he knew that no defence would avail any thing. But *Pilate*, willing to examine a little further into this matter, returned into the Judgment-hall, and calling Jesus, that he might enquire the more privately about it, asked him, whether he did really pretend to be the King of the Jews? Jesus could not relinquish his claim, but withal declared

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taken from all their courts a power and capacity of judging the capital matters.—I am apt to think these 40 years might begin about half a year before Christ's death.—V. *Lightfoot* on *John* xviii. 31. and on *Matth.* xxvi. 3.



declared, that his *kingdom was not of this world*; nor did it at all interfere with the lawful government of any other King. If it had been designed to be a temporal kingdom, there were enough who would have supported him in such a claim; but his views were not secular, nor did he endeavour to justify his pretensions by such means.—*Pilate*, rather surprized to hear such a claim maintained by one in his circumstances, asked him in derision, *Art thou a King then?* Jesus answered, with a becoming firmness of mind, that in truth he was; nor could he ever renounce that dominion, for the support of which he came into the world.

*Pilate*, not desirous of entering any further into this matter, which related only to a spiritual empire, that did not invade Cæsar's interests, left the bench, and taking Jesus with him, he went out to the Chief-priests and the people, who were assembled at the door, and professed to them, that upon examining their prisoner, he could find no fault in him, and therefore he was willing to release him. This would not satisfy the vehement spirit of the rulers, but rather exasperated them the more; and therefore, as they could not gain their point from *Pilate*, they contrived, by naming  
*Galilee,*

*Galilee*, a rebellious part of the country, as the scene of the civil commotions of which they plained of, to procure an order of examination before *Herod*, in whose jurisdiction *Galilee* lay, who had murdered his forerunner, and they might flatter themselves, that he would the more readily gratify their revenge in executing Jesus also. To this *Pilate* willingly consented (*Herod* being then at *Jerusalem* on account of the feast) hoping, by these means, to rid himself of the disagreeable task, for his government did not extend so far. But *Herod*, instead of treating the matter seriously, after asking him some questions, but getting no answer, looked upon him with disdain, as an insignificant, despicable person of no consequence; and his guards, as if he were insane, with the same contemptuous sneer, arrayed him in some cast-off garment of a gorgeous appearance, as a mock-king, and in this insolent manner sent him again to *Pilate*, without determining any thing in the matter: at the same time, however, so well pleased the compliment, that it brought about a reconciliation between *Herod* and *Pilate*, who were sworn enemies before, as is supposed, on account of the massacre that *Pilate* made of his subjects at *Jerusalem*, in the time of  
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the passover, mentioned by St. *Luke*, chap. xiii. 1.

Upon this, *Pilate* again called the chief-priests and the rulers of the people to his gate, and publicly declared, that he could not, upon examination, find the accused guilty of any of those crimes laid to his charge, and that neither could *Herod* make any material discovery against him: but that he might, in some measure, satisfy their fury, he was willing to scourge him, in order to discourage him from persisting longer in his enthusiastic claims, and would then dismiss him.

This, however, would not appease them, and therefore he had recourse to another expedient, by which he hoped to save the life of one whom he clearly saw to be innocent. He had himself introduced a custom, in order to gain popularity, of releasing some one prisoner, whom they should pitch upon, at the passover, which was a commemoration of deliverance to the whole nation. At this time, there happened to be a most notorious villain, named *Barabas*, who had infested the country by his numerous robberies, had raised an insurrection in the city, and had committed murder in the  
insurrection.

insurrection. He thought it impossible, and so would any one, that they would ever wish to preserve the life of such an outrageous culprit; and therefore he proposed Jesus with him for their choice, that one of the two might be released, not doubting but that they would chuse an innocent man, whom in their consciences too they knew to be such, before a thief and a murderer.—But in this, likewise, he was disappointed; for such was the malice of the chief-priests, that they prevailed upon the people, even to ask for the release of *Barabbas*, rather than for that of Jesus; crying out, in the most tumultuous manner, that they would have him to be crucified.

At this instant, a new incident arose, which perplexed the governor still more in his mind; for his wife sent a message to him, earnestly intreating him not to concern himself with the blood of that just man who was then at his bar, and against whom the Jews were so maliciously incensed; for that she had just then suffered much uneasiness in a dream, which, no doubt, was providentially designed on his account; for it portended a manifestation of his innocence. This alarmed him beyond all measure, and therefore he tried a  
second



second and a third time to gain their consent to his release, but in vain: they still insisted upon his condemnation, and impudently repeated the prescribed mode of punishment that should be inflicted upon him, the most ignominious, as well as the most cruel, which a heathen law could devise, *that* of crucifixion; so ignominious indeed, that the Romans would inflict it only upon the vilest of slaves; and so cruel, that St. Andrew was two whole days stretched upon the cross; and some other martyrs, who have undergone the same death, were rather starved, and devoured by birds, than killed by the excruciating agonies of the tree.

But still his heart relented: the admonition of such an extraordinary dream, and the conviction of his own conscience were not to be silenced at once; and therefore he ordered Jesus to be scourged, hoping, by the usual severity of such a punishment, to abate the barbarous rage of the populace, now at length excited against him to the uttermost. But the Roman soldiers, knowing that it was their cruel custom to scourge the prisoners, whom they afterwards intended to put to death, rather looked upon this as the prelude to his  
I crucifixion;

crucifixion; and therefore, after they had miserably torn his body with their whips, they dragged him into the common hall, with the whole band about him, who were insulting him as he went along; and having stripped him of that mock garment, in which Herod's men had, in derision, dressed him, they threw a loose purple coat about him for a robe, and the more to ridicule his pretensions to royalty, they maliciously put a wreath of thorns upon his head, by way of a crown, and a reed in his right hand for a sceptre, ludicrously paying their homage before him with the bended knee, and scoffingly saluting him with, *Hail, King of the Jews!* all health to thee, on this great accession-day! At the same time they spit upon his face, struck him on the cheek with their hands, and that his temples might be torn by the thorns, they took the cane out of his hand, and wantonly beat him with it on the head, scourging his body at the same time with whips.

Pilate, not conceiving but that their brutal malice must now be glutted by so much barbarous treatment, brought Jesus forth again to the gate, with all his mock ornaments, coat, reed, and thorns; his head and face besmeared

besmeared with the blood, that gushed out from the wounds of his mangled body; and said unto them, *Behold the man*; the rueful, miserable spectacle of undeserved suffering; behold him, and forbear!

But such a piteous object, instead of exciting their compassion, enraged them the more, from his pretence, in such forlorn circumstances, to be their King, especially, as he had declared himself to be the son of God also, which, according to the sense of their law, was direct blasphemy, and therefore, in the highest degree, capital.

The last accusation struck Pilate a-fresh with a strange mixture of reverential awe and astonishment, as doubting within himself, who this personage might at last prove to be; whether, according to his imbibed notions, some departed Hero, or great Demi-God. He therefore took Jesus back again into the Hall, that he might question him a little upon this head, which now appeared to be the most important article of impeachment against him. He desired of him then to tell him plainly, from whence he sprung, and what he meant by this divine original, which he thus assumed to him-

self. But Christ gave him no answer to his enquiry, either well knowing (for he *knew what was in man*,) that it would be in vain to answer him, or, that he might say nothing, whereby he might shew any intention to escape death. This surprized Pilate the more, and perhaps offended him, as he told Jesus that he could not but perceive his life to be in the hands of his judge, for that the Jewish power was now under the Roman controul. Jesus calmly replied, that all these events were in the hand of God, and that his judge could do nothing against him, but by divine permission; it might be added, but by divine appointment. This the Jews well understood, for they were acquainted with the Law and the Prophets, and not ignorant of his great miracles; and therefore their malicious persecution of him was the more inexcusable. He himself could not but know too, that it was unjust to condemn the innocent; and therefore he likewise had some considerable share, though not so great as the others, in the common guilt.

Still the Governor persisted in expressing his inclination to release him, which the Jews suspecting to be the case eagerly flew to their dernier resort, that if he should let this  
man



man escape, he could not be Cæsar's faithful deputy or friend: and the contrivance succeeded: for this surmise startled and perplexed Pilate more than ever: he knew the jealous temper of the old tyrant *Tiberius*, his master, how readily he would listen to such a misrepresentation of the fact, and that he would undoubtedly punish him, if he spared a rival; so that he might be obliged to answer such an ill-timed lenity with his own head. Through fear therefore, and not from a principle of inhumanity, he at last yielded to their overbearing solicitations, and bringing Jesus once more into the Hall, about six o'clock in the morning, he sat down on the judgment seat, which was then fixed in a place that was called the *Pavement*, "on account of a beautiful piece of Mosaic work, with which the floor was adorned;" but in the Hebrew, or rather in the Syriac language, it was called "*Gabbatha*, because it stood on an eminence:" Here he intended indeed to pass sentence upon him, which he could not well avoid, because of the popular clamour, but yet discovered at the same time, that it was against his inclination and opinion; for having now gained an acknowledgment from them of the sovereign authority of Cæsar, and secured himself from any

imputation of undermining it, to testify his reluctance, he called for water, as was customary both among Jews and Gentiles, and washing his hands before the multitude, in token of his own integrity of heart, he solemnly declared, that he passed the sentence against conviction; that he looked upon himself, and would be accounted by them, as innocent of the blood of this just person; for that he did not in his heart, consent to his death, and that they must answer for the consequences of inflicting it. This they were ready enough to venture, if they could but gain their point, and impiously cried out, in the heat of their unwarrantable resentment. "Let his blood, and all the most dreadful consequences of it, rest on us and our posterity." An imprecation, strange to thought, and shocking to humanity!

Hereupon Pilate condemned Jesus to the cross; and as soon as the horrid sentence was passed, he was delivered up to the merciless fury of the Jewish rabble, who began immediately to strip him of the purple robe in which the soldiers had dressed him up, and put his own garments on the mangled body, that he might the better be known to be the same person

person, adding fresh insults and indignities, whilst they led him away to the usual place of execution, in order to inflict immediately the sentence which they had extorted.

Like another Isaac, who was, in many circumstances a type of Christ, he carried the wood on which he was to be sacrificed; for they laid that part of a heavy cross, to which his arms were to be fastened, upon his bruised shoulders, now galled and sore with the lashes of scourging, and led him, in a mock-solemn triumph, through one of the principal streets of the city, shouting as they went along; till, finding him overwhelmed by the weight, faint with the loss of blood, and not able to walk with such a burthen as fast as they required, they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who was just then passing by, and whom they probably suspected of being one of his admirers, if not a disciple, to assist him in carrying at least one end of the beam the rest of the way. And to make the crucifixion, ignominious enough in itself, still more ignominious to him, they appointed two notorious malefactors for execution with him, putting him in the midst as the arch-malefactor,

that he might appear to be justly reckoned the worst among the worst of men.

In the midst of the throng, who were gathered together to see the crucifixion, were some women, who had formerly attended him with a devout pleasure; and now seeing the deplorable condition of their heavenly teacher, they could not help expressing their tender concern for him in the most affectionate lamentations and tears. But Jesus observing them, lifted up his bloody and disfigured countenance, desiring them not to weep for him, who was submitting to these direful sufferings, but rather for themselves and their children, who would quickly be involved in the calamitous judgements that would befall this wretched people upon that account. For, added he, *if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* that is, if I, who am an innocent sufferer, am, by the wisdom of Heaven, made subject to such extreme cruelties, what may not a guilty, impenitent nation expect from the provoked displeasure of an angry God?

At length, passing through the gates of the city, they arrived at the place of execution, which



which was on a rising ground, called Golgotha, or Calvary, a kind of charnel-house for the city, and the usual place for the execution of criminals; the very spot, as many have supposed, to which Abraham was directed for the sacrifice of his son Isaac: for it is a small eminence upon the greater mount of Moriah.

It was soon after nine o'clock in the morning, when they brought Jesus to Calvary; and when all things were got ready for the execution, they nailed his hands and his feet, the most sinewy, and therefore the most tender, parts of the body, to the cross, on the full stretch; and then fixing the fatal tree upright into the ground, they crucified him a little before noon.—That no one instance of barbarity might be omitted which could be devised, instead of the narcotic, usually administered to dying criminals to sooth their agonies, the soldiers prepared for him a mixture of vinegar and gall to drink; that they might, if possible, imbitter his last moments. But when he had tasted of the nauseous composition, he refused to drink it. Some of his friends, however, had, at the same time, provided a comfortable potion

of wine mingled with myrrh; but he refused likewise to drink of that; for he *despised the pain*, and wanted not to alleviate its severity by an intoxicating draught.

This account will help us to reconcile the seeming difference between St. Matthew and St. Mark concerning the potion given him; St. Matthew affirming, that it was *vinegar mingled with gall*, and St. Mark, that it was *wine mingled with myrrh*; both of them have said the truth; for it is probable that both were offered him; the latter by his friends, before he was nailed to the cross, and the former by the insulting soldiers, after he was fastened to it (e)!

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(e) V. Lightfoot on Mat. xxvii. 34. He supposes that the words of Mark relate to the custom of the nation, and those of Matthew to the fact. The one from customary humanity, the other in abuse and mockery. See him also on Luke xxiii. 36.—But, adds he, if you will grant a third cup then all difficulty vanisheth indeed. Let the first be *wine mingled with myrrh*; the second, *vinegar mingled with gall*; the third *meer vinegar*, which the soldiers gave to malefactors, if they desired to drink. But this was not given till he had cried out, *I thirst*, which was supplied from a vessel that was always ready at the place of execution for that purpose.

On the top of the cross, a superscription was fixed, as was usual in cases of extraordinary punishment, signifying the crime for which the malefactor suffered, *This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews*: And that it might be the better understood by all, it was written in the three most universal languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The chief-priests, however, were much offended at the form of this superscription, as if it confirmed his pretensions to that title, under which they disclaimed him, and therefore desired Pilate to alter it, and instead of *King of the Jews*, to write, *This is HE who pretended himself to be the King of the Jews*. But Pilate, with some warmth of displeasure at their spiteful demand, replied, that what he had written should stand as it was.

The first thing Jesus uttered in the midst of his anguish, was a benevolent petition to his Father, in behalf of his cruel murderers, containing the only excuse, that could have been formed, for this inhuman indulgence of their wanton cruelty: *forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

But whilst he was patiently breathing out compassion in the most extreme torments, the passengers and the multitude were trying to aggravate his misery, by throwing out the most bitter invectives with all the reviling speeches and provoking blasphemies they could invent. Some of them wagged their heads at him in a scornful manner, crying out, "Ah, thou vain boaster, who didst once pretend to have power enough to destroy the Temple, and to re-build it in three days, save thyself: and, if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross, by a notable exertion of thy Godhead:"—Whilst others again, in a no less scornful sneer, upbraided him with their scoffs:—"He saved others, let him now save himself:" if he be, what he presumed to call himself, the king of the Jews, let him come down from the cross, and we will promise then to believe him. Nay, even one of the malefactors (*f*) who were crucified with him,

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(*f*) St. Matthew says, that *both of them cast the same in his teeth*; and it is probable, as St. Chrysostom and Jerom have understood this passage, "that both of them did at first rail on Jesus, thinking perhaps by this artifice



him, an audacious hardened wretch, derided him, with the like abusive language, urging him, if he were indeed the Messiah, to save himself, and them too who were dying with him.

But the other criminal, touched with a sense of his own sin, and by a wonderful impulse of divine grace convinced of the innocence of their fellow-sufferer, checked him with a serious rebuke, "What, dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art condemned to undergo the same punishment, within a moment too of entering into the awful presence of thy Maker? and that most justly, for we receive but the due reward of our deeds,

whereas

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artifice to obtain some help towards procuring their pardon; but being disappointed of their hopes, and hearing Jesus praying for his crucifiers, one of them was thereby prevailed upon, and converted." *Light-foot* adds, that if the penitent thief did for a while join with the other in his petulant reproaches, (which seems intimated to us, Matt. xxvii. 44.) yet was his heart touched at length, and perhaps, upon his observation of that miraculous darkness, which at that time covered the world; *Lightf.* on Luke xxiii. 42.—But by the harmony it appears that this passed before the darkness came on.

whereas this man has done nothing that appears to deserve it." Then looking upon Jesus, in full persuasion of his innocence, and in firm reliance on his divine authority, he said, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* For though all the world have abandoned thee as an impostor, I am persuaded, by the gracious words which proceed out of thy mouth, that thou wilt reign triumphant over death and the grave; therefore remember me, O my Lord, for this penitent confession of thy divine nature.—Jesus knew the sincerity of his heart; and with a mixture of dignity and mercy, assured him, that, for this his faithful acknowledgement, he should that very day be translated with him into Paradise, or, into the place appointed for the reception of happy, departed souls, waiting for the consummation of their bliss at the general resurrection.

While he was thus hanging on the cross, he espied his mother, her sister, Mary Magdalene, together with some other pious women, and his beloved disciple St. John, standing near the cross, the sad spectators of this dismal tragedy, who were expressing their grief in strong crying and tears. As soon as he saw  
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his mother and John standing near each other, forgetting, as it were, his own sufferings, he first recommended John to her affection, and then bequeathed his disconsolate mother to John's protection, which wrought so powerfully upon both their minds, that they thenceforward lived together with all the cordial tenderness and affection of parent and child.

At noon began an amazing supernatural darkness, which lasted for three hours, over all the land of Judea, so great that the stars appeared; and the more remarkable, because it could not be occasioned by an eclipse, as the moon was then at the full, and therefore on the opposite side of the hemisphere to the sun. But so terrifying was the sight, and all things in such horror and confusion, that the hearts of his very persecutors began to relent, and instead of persisting in their former insults, they stood in a fearful amazement at what might be the issue of the whole.

During the whole time of the darkness our Lord remained languishing under his agonies in patient silence. But at the ninth hour, or at three o'clock in the afternoon, when the darkness ceased, he burst out into a complaint,  
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in the prophetic strain of the Psalmist, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabaethani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Whereupon one of the soldiers, hearing the sound of *Eli*, or *Eloi*, but not quite understanding the import of it, because it was spoken partly in the Syriac dialect, and partly in the Chaldee (*g*), supposed, perhaps scornfully, that he was calling for *Elias* to assist him in his last distress, from a common opinion of *Elias's* coming to comfort and succour those who were in distress or perplexity; and hearing him, immediately after this, crying out, as if he were parched with drought, the usual effect of such a lingering death, *I thirst*, dipped a sponge into the vessel of vinegar, which stood there, and putting it round a stalk of hyssop, fastened to a reed or cane, offered it to him to drink. Others however were for letting this alone, that they might wait to see whether *Elias*, whom they insultingly supposed he called in vain to his help, would come and take him down from the cross, that he might save his life. But as soon

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(*g*) See *Lightfoot* on Matt. xxvii. 49, and on Mark xv. 34.



soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar, he felt the pangs of death upon him, and knowing that every prophecy concerning him was now fulfilled, and the great work of man's redemption accomplished, he said, *it is finished*. Then with another strong cry, recommending his soul into the hands of his father, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

This state of the several transactions, before and after the darkness, will obviate an objection, which has been more than once insidiously suggested against this part of the history, and remove the difficulties that might be raised, against the answer of a celebrated apologist to it: for when former cavillers object, that if the darkness were so intense as it is represented, our Saviour could not have distinguished his mother and John, nor could the soldiers so easily have found the hyssop and sponge and vinegar which they offered to him; and when the latter advocate for christianity answers, that the darkness might not be so great, but that the people about the cross might be seen and known, and that Jesus spoke to his mother and the beloved disciple during the continuance of it; it is evident  
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that both have mistaken the true state of the case: had they consulted the harmony of the Evangelists, they would have found, that Jesus recommended his mother and the beloved disciple to each other, before the darkness came on, and that the vinegar was not offered, till it was over, but that during the darkness, which was doubtless very great and terrifying, nothing was either said or done, for Jesus continued that whole time silent and passive.

Immediately upon his expiring, a still more awful scene appeared; for a dreadful earthquake ensued, which split the rocks asunder, and opened the graves, so that the bodies of several who were buried there arose and went into Jerusalem, where they were openly seen, and known by many; and, to complete the whole, which was, if possible, the most surprising event of all, at least to the Jews, the veil of the temple, which separated the holy from the most holy place and concealed the sacred Mosaic mysteries from the eyes of the people, was rent in two from the top to the bottom.

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These amazing prodigies, which attended his death, had such an effect upon the Roman Centurion, who guarded the execution, that with a full conviction of mind, he professed his belief in the perfect innocence of the martyred Jesus, and could not but acknowledge him to be the son of God, or the true Messias, of whom he had heard so many and great things spoken by the Jews.—The soldiers too, who were placed there with the Centurion, joined with him in the same confession of faith; and all the multitude, who were gathered together upon this extraordinary occasion, were struck with such amazement and consternation, that they smote their breasts for sorrow, or concern, for what they had done, and returned home, dreading the most alarming consequences.

It was on Friday about three o'clock in the afternoon when our Saviour died, which was the preparation-day (*b*) for the paschal festival,

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(*b*) So called, either because they prepared themselves for the sabbath. or rather, because they prepared provisions to be eaten on the sabbath. V. *Lightfoot* on *Mark* xv. ver. 42.

festival, then falling upon the Jewish sabbath, and observed with great solemnity as a high day. That it might not be profaned therefore by the dead bodies hanging upon the cross all night, in express contradiction to the law, (*Deut. xxi. ver. 22, 23.*) the Jews requested Pilate, that he would give orders to the soldiers, who were still attending, that the legs of the sufferers might be broken, for their more effectual dispatch if they were not yet quite dead, and their bodies taken down. In pursuance of these orders, the soldiers broke the legs, as was customary, of the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus : but when they came to him, and found that he was dead already, they would not break his legs, but instead of this, influenced unknowingly by an impulse, which confirmed the truth of the prophecies concerning him, one of them, from mere wantonness, pierced his side with a spear, and out of the wound issued a great quantity of blood, and water mingled with it ; the sure token of the heart being wounded, and therefore of certain death. (*i*)

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(*i*) He pierced the pericardium and heart, insomuch that there came out the serum, or lymph, or thin watery



Among the rest of Jesus's admirers, there was one, named Joseph, a rich man of *Arimathea*, or *Ramoth*, and probably one of the Jewish council, who had not given his concurrence with them in condemning him: he went to Pilate, and begged leave to take down the body of Jesus, that he might bury it. This he easily obtained; and the body being accordingly delivered to him, he, for the present, wrapped it up in fine linen cloths, which he had provided for that purpose. At the same time, Nicodemus, the ruler, who had formerly held a private conference with Jesus by night, out of great regard for his deceased Lord, brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, with other spices and perfumes, that he might embalm his body, according to the custom of the Jews, before they buried their much-esteemed friends.

Not far from the place of execution, Joseph had a garden, wherein he had lately hewn a sepulchre

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very part, as well as the coagulated blood, which was sufficient to put his death out of all dispute.—*Benson's Hist.* p. 318.

sepulchre out of a rock for his own interment. After they had therefore embalmed their Saviour's body, and wound it up close in the linen cloths, they buried it in this new tomb, and closing the mouth of the tomb with a large stone, there they left it, and departed.

SECT.

## S E C T. II.

## THE REFLECTIONS.

**T**HIS day is a day of trouble and of rebuke, and blasphemy; but it is the great and important day of man's redemption, begun in the sufferings, and sealed with the blood, of the Saviour. Let us stand still, and consider this wonderful work of God.—Behold the Redeemer of the world, who came to give life, under the reproachful sentence of death! behold him arraigned at the bar as a malefactor, whose innocence alone could atone for the guilt of his accusers! behold him condemned, that we might be acquitted!—Much could it avail his persecutors, to be scrupulously nice about the defilement, which they might contract by entering into the house of a heathen, whilst they harboured worse than the worst of all heathenish defilements in their own malicious breasts. The same feet which made haste to shed blood, must not tread

tread upon the threshold of an impure house; the feet of those men who were themselves full of impurity. What is this, but to strain at a gnat, and to swallow a camel? or, what is this, but to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, while their inward part is full of all uncleanness? But such is the state of their deceitful hearts, who pretend to be very exact in the appendages of religion, while they scruple not to neglect the essentials of duty: nay, these very appendages may be thus made subservient to the contempt of essentials; for men may be found, who desire only to make a fair shew in the flesh, while they conceive the most abominable purposes in the heart.

Not that ceremonials are therefore to be abolished; for they may assist the spirit of devotion, and contribute not a little to the decency of it: but when they are rested in so far as to exclude internal sanctity, or to disguise the want of it, they make such a profession of religious duty to become vain, and may destroy the substance, while they support the shadow, of piety. In the present case, it was more likely, that the presence of these monsters in iniquity, who came upon so villainous an errand, should defile the walls of Pilate,



Pilate, than that those walls should defile them. If they had nothing more than this upon their consciences, they might have gone from thence, and eaten the passover with quiet minds.

But their undertaking was too base even for an heathen to join in, without some misgivings of heart. Tho' the whole Jewish priesthood had signed the conviction, he would not condemn without examination. After examination, he thrice proclaimed the arraigned guiltless. Had he persisted in this resolute conduct to the last, he had washed his hands in innocency: but at last he passes sentence upon the prisoner, whom he acquits, and with the same breath declaredly finds nothing in him capitally criminal, yet dooms him to the death of a malefactor.—How often do they begin well, who have not resolution to go on! how much oftener do the conscience and the tongue vary from each other! we call him Lord, and yet condemn his words; we call him Master, and yet disobey his commands: were we true to his service, neither the importunity of friends, nor the reproaches of enemies, would prevail upon us to desert it.

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But it is suggested too strongly, that if Pilate should let this man go unpunished, he could not be Cæsar's friend, though he bore his commission. What a tumult does this single suggestion raise in the breast of this ambitious, time-serving hypocrite! conscience urges him to spare the life of an innocent man; popular applause commands the condemnation of him, though innocent.——When worldly interest struggles with a good inclination, it is easy to foresee how the competition will end: Conviction is silenced, and admonition has no influence: we yield ourselves captives to the subtle insinuation, and fall victims to the idol whom we mean to adore.

If any admonition could prevail against such a powerful motive, the testimony which the wife of Pilate bore, by her dream, to the prisoner, witnessing for him that he was a just man, must have proved a sufficient warning. How merciful are the checks of Providence, which would stop us in the sinful career! conveyed it may be, through faithful friends, or by the still more faithful suggestions of conscience: and it is our duty to hearken to them; for however we may make light of these divine admonitions, when they are given as warn-  
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ings against sin, the time will come, that we shall not be able so easily to slight them, when they are recollected as aggravations of it.

But let us not lose sight of the bleeding, the disguised, the mangled Jesus. He is brought forth by this cautious judge to the gate of his palace, as a spectacle of compassion mingled with contempt; for both, it is to be suspected, were included in that ambiguous appeal to the people, Behold the man! Is this poor despicable object ever likely to wrest the sceptre out of Cæsar's hands? or, is not your cruelty yet sufficiently glutted at the sight of such a miserable forlorn sufferer?—Behold the man indeed! The day will come, when ye shall behold him with other feelings, and in another form. How will these his persecutors be amazed to see that head, which they had insolently ornamented with a crown of thorns, surrounded with the heavenly glory? How will the scornful of our days be surprized to hear the praises of the saints filling those ears which now tingled with ludicrous reproaches? How will the hypocritical worshippers of all ages tremble at seeing every knee in heaven and earth bowing in awful adoration, before him, to whom

they had accustomed themselves to bend the knee but in solemn mockery?

Instead of *Behold the man!* let us cry out, *Behold the Lamb of God!* For he is now led as a lamb to the slaughter, not with the common decency shewn even to a malefactor, but with greater indignity, and less feeling, than ever was shewn to the worst of malefactors. Their unhappy fate is seldom viewed without some expression of compassion, whether they may deserve it, or not; but the innocent Jesus is reviled, as he goes along, with every taunting reproach that might disturb or discompose his mind. The burthen of his cross was enough of itself to exhaust his drooping spirits; but what was this to the burthen of the sins of all mankind, that, like the legal scape-goat, was laid upon him? This may teach us at least to submit to the ordinary crosses of life with a silent patience, and to the virulent calumnies of malicious tongues with meekness. We cannot suffer so unjustly, or so bitterly, as our Redeemer did. We may receive but the due reward of our deeds. Instead of murmuring or repining at this, let us be admonished to forsake the sins, that have deserved it. While we condemn



damn the cruelty of the Jews, let us not add an increase of our own. Let us forbear to throw upon his memory that contempt, which they had conceived for his person; and, above all, let us not, by repeated neglect of his commands, put him again to an open shame.

He was numbered with the transgressors; but in the midst of this disgrace, the glory of his divinity shone through the veil of humility, and *that* bright enough to strike forcibly on the hitherto benumbed senses of an old offender, from whom it drew a confession, and with that a supplication in behalf of his departing soul, which might well have become the best disciple of the christian school. The gracious answer made to it could not but confirm the faith, which a sudden illumination, not to be accounted for from ordinary causes, had suggested. For by this the Almighty Sufferer declared, that although he was undergoing misery as a man, yet he was able to relieve others from it as a God, and that whilst he was dying on the cross as the son of Adam, he could dispose of Paradise as the son of God.

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But let not this extraordinary instance of the penitent thief be drawn into an encouragement to the wilfully obstinate to put off their repentance, it may be, to a dying hour. It is more than probable, that this dying criminal had never before heard of Christ, or his Gospel; (St. *Chrysostom* and St. *Jerom* have conjectured, that he had been prepossessed against Christ as an impostor); or if he had, yet he now recognizes him as the king of glory, in the lowest state of humiliation that can well be conceived; and in the agonies of death, as the Lord of life. This is so far from making him a late penitent, that it gives him the merit of an early convert; for his heart was open to the first impressions of grace, and he wanted not so much the inclination as the opportunity of being brought before over to the truth (*k*).

But they who from hence, upon presume such a sudden change of their hearts, at the point of death, as they could never be prevailed upon to attempt, during the whole course of their lives, have made that  
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(*k*) See *Stanhope's* Sermon. 4.

hope in infinite goodness, which should have led them the sooner to repentance, the chief ground of their provocations against it, and instead of placing a religious confidence in the God of mercy, have bidden open defiance to the God of justice.—The thief acknowledged this king of glory on the cross; these men disown him upon the throne. Can such an habitual indulgence, such a profligate zeal in the service of sin, hope for pardon? But yet this singular example will teach us one comfortable lesson; that repentance, when earnest, is never too late, provided always that it be the genuine effect of conviction, not the hasty production of fear.

If a malefactor in the agonies of death could; on the other hand, be so hardened as to challenge from Jesus a rescue, that he might satisfy him and others with a confirmation of his pretensions to the Messiahship, it is no wonder that the by-standers should call out for a proof of the same claim, by a descent from the cross, for their conviction. But what shall we say then? Shall we join in the cry, *come down, thou sufferer, from the cross and we will believe?* Nay, but rather, if thou hadst been provoked by these insolent scoffs to come down from the cross, to what

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purpose

purpose should we believe? for what had then become of us, and the work of our redemption? Nay, but, O Saviour, forgive them, for they know not what they say. Happy is it for us, that thou wouldst not save thyself from the sufferings of the cross; but wouldst rather die there to save others. And yet not till with the last bitter potion, were thy sufferings ended. It was then, and not till then, that thou couldst declare, with thy dying breath, *it is finished*. The counsel of God was then fulfilled; the prophecies were accomplished; the obligation of the law was abolished, and man's redemption was completed. Nothing then remained but a voluntary resignation of thine innocent soul into the hands of thine eternal father; a bowing of the head for the assumption of an incorruptible crown; and a peaceable yielding up the ghost, for an entrance into rest, triumph, and glory. Lord! enable us to follow thee now, that we may be qualified to follow thee hereafter!

But call back your thoughts a little, and imagine, that you saw your Redeemer hanging on the cross. *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?* Can you look upon him without



out concern, or without great searchings of heart? Are your hearts as adamant, and your eyes as marble, that you will not bestow upon him one compassionate sigh or tear?—But hear what the dying innocent will say unto you from thence, and then refrain if you can.—Weep not for me, but for yourselves; for your own sins, which have occasioned this suffering, not for the sorrow of me, who endure it. Those sins have nailed me to the cross, and shed my blood; yet what are all these bruises or wounds, in comparison of what I feel besides? I feel the wrath of God, and all the vengeance due to you for them. You know the price of sin, that nothing less than my death could atone for it; can you still take pleasure in it? You condemn the malice of the Jews, the treachery of Judas, the injustice of Pilate, and the barbarity of the soldiers: yet you can riot in debaucheries, scoff at every thing religious, blaspheme my name, and cast my words behind you. Is not this to crucify me afresh, and put me to an open shame? Is this the recompence you make to infinite love, to renew and redouble, by your daily transgressions, my ignominy and pains? Every one of your sins is a thorn, a nail, and a spear to me. But turn and

believe, and look with an eye of faith on him, whom you have pierced. I have overcome the bitterness of death; in your patience possess ye your souls, and in comfort. There is not one of your sins, for which, if sincerely repented of, I have not atoned. Strive only, and suffer, as the captain of your salvation has set you an example, and your crown is ready. Your day of deliverance shall come: your redemption is near: your sorrows shall have an end; your joys shall not: your pains shall soon be finished; your glory shall be finished too, but never end.—Thus thou speakest unto us, O Lord, in thy holy word; may thy servants hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously!

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THE  
EXHORTATION.

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**I** BESEECH you, *brethren*, *suffer the word of exhortation*; you have seen in what manner your Lord and Saviour passed the week comprising the termination of his life, to him, a melancholy, to yourselves, an interesting event, for your salvation depended upon it. Judge of yourselves then, what ought to be the employment of your thoughts, during the time of these important transactions. Common decency has forbidden the continuance of all the public diversions for this week; and what does this suggest to you, but that the same motive alone might restrain your usual entertainments in private? Be they, in themselves, ever so innocent, you know that they would profane the sabbath; and why may not the solemnity of this season change their nature as much?

much? But one week in the year, is required for such a self-denial (unless you would be persuaded, after the example of your fore-fathers, that it would be as decent during the whole season of Lent) though a total dissipation is at all times dangerous at least, if not criminal. Surely, you will not think it a hard or unreasonable service, to dedicate so small a portion of your time to the remembrance of your suffering master, who deserves, for what he then underwent for your sakes, the consecration of your whole lives.

Had a common friend offered to undergo some severe treatment, and at last to lay down his own life, in order to rescue from destruction yours, would you not remember the kindness of your devoted substitute with the most grateful sentiments, and recollect, at least, the annual return of his suffering hours with some tender feelings? But what is the most that the best and greatest friend can do or suffer for the preservation of your perishing life, in comparison of what your Redeemer did and suffered for the purchase of your eternal life and salvation?

If you ask me in what manner I would have you observe the week? I answer, in a more  
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## THE EXHORTATION. 207

than ordinary seclusion from the amusements or diversions that fill up the vacant spaces of your other time, in a daily attendance upon the public service of the church, if that does not interfere too much with the duties of your daily calling; and in that, which cannot interfere with it, a devout meditation on the important subjects of it in private. The time, and the circumstances of it, call upon you to be serious; they will, if you consider them at all, scarcely allow you to be otherwise. What an egregious insensibility then, nay worse, what a contemptuous abuse does it discover of the greatest blessing, that was ever designed for the whole race of mankind, to indulge such an uninterrupted levity of thought and manners, as turns the grace of God into wantonness, and the means of grace into scorn?

Our pious fore-fathers undoubtedly meant to distinguish this week by a truly religious solemnization, when they appointed the additional service of the church, which is ordered for every respective day of it. They entertained within themselves, and recommended to their posterity, the most awful ideas of that propitiation, which was now offered for the sins of the whole world; and these,  
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they well understood, could not be so properly expressed, as by repeated acknowledgments of the invaluable benefits, which the sufferings of the Lamb of God procured. These are surely the best means that could well be devised, to cherish in our hearts a due sense of the mercies, which could not otherwise have been insured, and of the pardon of our numberless offences, which could not otherwise have been granted.

We do not presume to say, that no other method could have been contrived by infinite wisdom for the remission of sins, besides the sufferings and death of his beloved son; but since he has thought fit to prescribe this, shall we shew ourselves as little affected by it, or as much devoted to business or pleasure, during the few days that he was undergoing the severest hardships of body and soul for our sakes, as if we had no concern in the good effect of them? Will you call this consistent? Is it even decent? It is ungrateful.

Consider, I beseech you, do you not willingly comply with the injunctions of authority in observing, with a due solemnity, those days of humiliation and fasting, which are  
wisely

wisely instituted to avert, by our supplications and prayers, those temporal judgments, which the offended Majesty of Heaven may inflict for our national sins or defects; and will you pass by unnoticed, as if claiming no regard, those days of penitential observance, which the same authority has piously prescribed for our escape from those eternal judgments, to which, without a Mediator, we must have been exposed, and, even with a Mediator, may be exposed again, by a repetition of former negligences, or an omission of repentance for them? Shall we shew no veneration, no gratitude for the great atonement, that has recovered to our devoted souls the inestimable blessing of immortal life, which we had justly forfeited?

It is surely a fair opportunity put into our hands of examining into the state of our souls, of bewailing and lamenting the wretchedness into which we have brought ourselves, of possessing our minds with a becoming sense, of that justice of God which might have condemned us for ever, and of that mercy of God, which has graciously preserved us from destruction; and, in consequence of this, of adoring, the infinite goodness of a provoked Creator for having provided such a sacrifice,  
and

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and the infinite loving-kindness of the Redeemer for having offered himself a sacrifice, that he might reconcile heaven and earth together, expiate the guilt of sinful mortals, restore them to lost favor, and establish their everlasting peace.

These are the subjects of meditation, which will become us at all times, but more especially at this time, when we are called, as it were, into *the house of mourning*. “ Then is  
 “ the proper time to set upon repenting of  
 “ our manifold sins and offences; for the  
 “ mind is humbled and brought low: then is  
 “ the heart softened, and made more susceptible of impressions, then is the memory  
 “ more distinct and faithful: then is the conscience more awakened and disturbed: and  
 “ then more apprehensive of its danger: all  
 “ which are natural dispositions to repentance.

“ But, lest our fondness and self-love, together with the listlessness to enter upon  
 “ any thing we apprehend uneasy, which  
 “ most of us bear about us, should hinder or  
 “ delay too long our undertaking that most  
 “ necessary



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“ necessary work of consideration, recollec-  
 “ tion and repentance, our Church itself  
 “ hath set apart and consecrated a time and  
 “ season proper for such purpose; and hath  
 “ prudentially prescribed to all her children  
 “ meditation, prayer and fasting, as the means  
 “ and method of attaining that good end,  
 “ which all of us pretend to aspire after. She  
 “ hath erected, as it were, this temporary  
 “ house of mourning, wherein she would  
 “ oblige us *annually* to enter, and to do those  
 “ good works, the fears would not be done  
 “ without it: the making the heart wiser and  
 “ better; the calling to mind our past of-  
 “ fences; the seriously bewailing and repent-  
 “ ing of them; asking of God, with all hu-  
 “ mility, his pardon and forgiveness; pur-  
 “ posing stedfastly to lead a new and better  
 “ life; to follow the commands of God; and  
 “ from thenceforth to walk according to his  
 “ will. These are the resolutions and the  
 “ works she would have us entertain ourselves  
 “ withal, *this sober season*.

“ For these purposes, as well as for the  
 “ sake of the example of our Lord, the num-  
 “ ber of forty days was certainly pitched  
 “ upon

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“ upon, and placed at this season, before his  
 “ resurrection, to take in the time of his  
 “ death and sufferings, that those might be  
 “ the especial subjects of our meditation. Not  
 “ that we should spend that time in vain and  
 “ fruitless sorrows for those wounds and  
 “ stripes, by which our souls are healed,  
 “ and for that death, by which we are re-  
 “ deemed from misery (for we had mourned  
 “ without reason, had they *not* been under-  
 “ gone) but that we should reflect in earnest  
 “ on the occasion and necessity our sins had  
 “ made of such a sacrifice; and learn to ab-  
 “ hor ourselves in sackcloth and ashes.—One  
 “ cannot be insensible at the recital and re-  
 “ membrance of his personal sufferings.—  
 “ The mourning we are called to is a serious  
 “ and composed frame of mind, with which  
 “ we are to enter into the disquisition how  
 “ we have passed the time of our sojourning  
 “ here:—and to consider withal, those  
 “ amazing methods God hath taken to cover  
 “ us from his wrath, and free us from the  
 “ dreadful consequences of it: the sending  
 “ Christ into the world to live for our exam-  
 “ ple and instruction, and to die a painful  
 “ death for our redemption; to offer up upon  
 “ the

## THE EXHORTATION. 217

“ the cross an all-sufficient sacrifice, to re-  
 “ concile us to the father; to make atone-  
 “ ment and obtain forgiveness for all the sins  
 “ we shall truly repent of and leave; and,  
 “ when this world is at an end, to raise our  
 “ bodies from the dust, as heretofore he did  
 “ his own, and re-unite them to their souls,  
 “ never to be again divided, but live in ever-  
 “ lasting happiness in Heaven.

“ These are the subjects, that the wisdom  
 “ of the Church advises us to fix our thoughts  
 “ upon, at this particular season, in order to  
 “ the making the heart wiser and better. And  
 “ that we might attend more freely to these  
 “ matters, she advises *abstinence*, and a pru-  
 “ dent retrenchment of all those superfluities,  
 “ that minister to luxury, more than neces-  
 “ sity : by which the busy spirits are com-  
 “ posed and quieted; the loose and scattered  
 “ thoughts are recollected, and brought home;  
 “ and such a serious sober frame of mind put  
 “ on, that we think with less distraction,  
 “ remember more exactly, pray with more  
 “ fervency, repent more earnestly, and resolve  
 “ with more deliberation on amendment.  
 “ These are the beneficial fruits and effects  
 “ of

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“ of a reasonable, well-grounded abstinence,  
 “ as every one may find by their experi-  
 - “ ence.” (l)

But above all I would recommend a more than ordinary strict observance of that solemn day, on which our Saviour died upon the cross, commonly called GOOD-FRIDAY, and so called from those speakable good things, which were purchased for us by the death of the blessed Jesus. (m) We are told by a very pious writer (Mr. Nelson) that in the year 1710, authority did worthily require this day to be observed as a day of devotion, sequestered from all worldly business: and that accordingly it was religiously observed throughout the whole city of London, by shutting up of shops, and by attending the public assemblies. (n) Pity it is, and a shame too, that we have, in our days, fallen so much short of this truly christian reverence for so solemn, so great, so important a day.——It were much

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(l) Fleetwood's works, p. 714—16.

(m) *Wheatly* on the Com. Prayer, *Good-Friday*.

(n) *Comp. to Fest. and Fasts*, p. 484.



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much to be wished, that not only the primitive discipline of the Church should be revived, but that it should be every where established, as a custom, that the most holy service of the sanctuary, the blessed sacrament of the Lord's supper, should be administered on this day: for as that is a devout commemoration of the death and sufferings of the true paschal lamb, the Redeemer of the world, it can never with greater propriety be solemnized, than on that very day, on which the sacrifice, meant to be represented in this service, was really offered, as an atonement for those sins, which we then profess to lament and abhor; and on which we are publicly declaring a thankful acknowledgment of the inestimable blessings purchased for us by his ignominious death.

If we will weigh and consider these things as we ought, it is to be hoped, that we shall  
“ by God's grace return to a better mind:  
“ for the obtaining of which, we shall not  
“ cease to make our humble petitions unto  
“ Almighty God our heavenly Father.”

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